

# THE TIMES

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**30p**  
EVERY WEEKDAY

## Three Britons killed in shoot-out

### Tourist hostages die in botched rescue

By Stephen Farrell and Richard Duce

THREE British tourists and one Australian were killed and three other Westerners injured in Yemen yesterday when government troops stormed the hideout of an Islamic kidnapper.

The botched rescue attempt in the remote southern town of al-Wadea was launched by security forces the day after terrorists demanding the release of their leaders seized 16 tourists.

Ten of the holidaymakers were last night safely back in Aden amid confusion over the circumstances of the rescue attempt. It came within hours of the Yemeni authorities and Victor Henderson, the British Ambassador, expressing optimism over a peaceful end to the incident.

A police officer and two kidnappers were said to have been killed while three policemen and five kidnappers were wounded.

Critics of the decision to use force saw it as a misguided attempt to appear strong in the face of continuing kidnappings. There have been more than 100 kidnappings of Western tourists since 1992 but until now none have ended in death.

However, the Yemenis claim that the operation was launched after the captors had already begun shooting the Westerners.

The operation started after abductees started killing hostages. They killed two, and then our forces stormed them to prevent the killing of more hostages," the official said.

David Pearce, deputy head of mission at the British Embassy in the capital Sanaa, yesterday travelled to Aden where the injured and rescue parties were staying, to identify the victims. He said the freed hostages had been taken to a hotel where British and American volunteers were helping them. "They are obviously in a state of severe shock and I mean severe shock," he said.

"They are uninjured but obviously very tired, very stunned and in need of a good meal, a good rest and someone to talk to. They have been

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through an awful experience." The 12 British, two American and two Australian tourists were kidnapped at Ibb on Monday by around 20 men armed with bazookas and Kalashnikov assault rifles at a roadblock near Mawdiyah, 175 miles south of the capital. They were travelling in five four-wheel drive vehicles from Habban to Aden.

Explore Worldwide, the holiday firm which organised the 15-day, £1,300 trip, said the kidnappers, thought to belong to a group named Islamic Jihad, blocked the convoy by driving one of its vehicles in between the first and second car, allowing the occupants of the leading vehicle to escape and raise the alarm.

Sue Ockwell, a spokeswoman for the holiday firm, insisted that the company had followed Foreign Office advice to evacuate the tourists to Aden and keep in touch with the kidnappers. The firm was last night trying to contact the kidnappers but said some had proved difficult to find because they were away for Christmas.

Explore Worldwide are specialist in operating in such companies. They followed the Foreign Office advice to the letter. I do not think

anyone could have foreseen this. There was no inkling of anything on this particular stretch of road," Ms Ockwell said.

The Aldershot-based company's brochure offers trips to regions inhabited by "a colourful people whose medieval way of life has hardly changed." The company, which took 220 people to Yemen this year, described all the hostages as "seasoned travellers". In 1997 there were 84,000 foreign tourists to the Yemen, including 6,385 from Britain.

In the past, hostage-takers from tribes in remote mountainous areas have tended to free their captives in return for ransom or government promises to improve the infrastructure of their regions, such as new roads, electricity supplies or schools.

But the reported involvement of Islamic Jihad signalled something more serious and the Yemeni Government is thought to have launched the raid in an attempt to appear decisive in its fight against terrorism.

Yemeni security officials said the gunmen appeared to have received military training and were demanding the release of two leaders. Islamic Jihad in Yemen is believed to be about 200-strong, made up of Arab volunteers who fought with the Mujahidin against the Russians in Afghanistan. It has a training camp in the mountains around Abyan which was recently closed down by the Government and is thought to have links with Egyptian Islamic groups.

Some reports claimed the kidnappers had demanded an end to sanctions against Iraq, timing the ultimatum to coincide with a three-day visit to Yemen by Muhammad Said al-Sahhaf, the Iraqi Foreign Minister.

Before the deaths Mr Henderson had been optimistic, saying earlier in the day that the Yemeni Ministry of the Interior had assured him that it knew where the hostages were being held and had reports that they were safe and well.



Armed Yemeni tribesmen on patrol in the area where the hostages were killed

### Foreign Office tells travellers to quit Yemen

By Michael Binyon and Arthur Leathley

THE Foreign Office yesterday urged all British tourists to leave Yemen as soon as possible after the killing of three Britons and an Australian in an attempt to rescue them from their kidnappers.

In an urgent update of its travel advice, it also warned anyone whose visit was not essential not to go to Yemen. And it said all British citizens living in Yemen should be extra vigilant and prudent.

The advice will be sent to all tour operators who arrange holidays in Yemen, an increasingly popular destination. The 84,000 tourists last year included 6,385 Britons, most of whom joined tours focusing on the country's medieval architecture, fortified villages and remote mountain ranges.

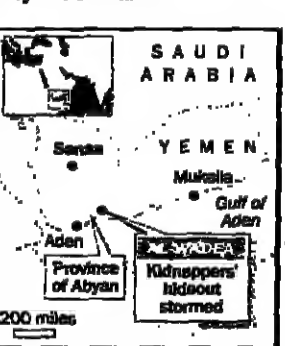
Until yesterday the Foreign Office had simply warned tourists to be aware of the risk of "random kidnapping" in the country. It said that those abducted had generally been well-treated and were eventually released after mediation.

Many British visitors on organised tours are older professional people, able to afford prices of about £2,000 for 15-day tours. However, younger tourists have been attracted recently by opportunities to visit remote areas of the ancient home of the Queen of Sheba.

Penny Hughes, a British tourist who returned from Yemen last month, said: "You do need to have a guide because there are so many passport checks. It is not the sort of country that you can travel around freely. But we never felt in any danger and the people were incredibly friendly."

Although there are few Britons living in Yemen, many Yemenis have British passports and Yemenis constitute the biggest Arab community in Britain, including the renowned boxer "Prince" Naseem Hamed. Most settled in Cardiff and other ports generations ago when British ships made regular runs to Aden. Hostage-taking has become an agonising issue. British diplomats usually urge local governments to negotiate and to avoid any actions that would endanger lives. Britain also insists that ransom should not be made — though this is the norm in Yemen.

Apart from those seized on Monday, seven other Britons were kidnapped this year, in Sudan, Angola, Chechnya and Yemen. Only two are still missing and believed to be alive — Douglas Kear, who was kidnapped in August in the Congo, and Jason Pope, who was seized when an armed group attacked a diamond mine in the north of Angola. Nothing has been heard since 1995 of the two Britons seized in Kashmir, and hopes are fading that they are still alive.



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### 1998: a year of disaster

The world is being hit by three times as many natural disasters as it was in the 1960s, experts said, as they declared 1998 the most disaster-ridden on record. Studies by Munich Re, one of the biggest re-insurance companies, indicate that the typhoons, storms and floods are costing many billions of dollars more than 30 years ago. The cost the world's economies, after adjusting for inflation, is nine times higher and for the insurance industry three times as much, said a spokesman.

### Holiday threat for children

By John O'Leary  
Education Editor

TRAVEL companies are to be asked to warn parents in brochures that they risk damaging children's education by taking them away in term-time. The move comes after an appeal by ministers for help in stemming the growth in unauthorised absence from school.

Official figures on this month show a 1 per cent increase in truancy, much of it condoned by parents. The National Association of Head Teachers says today that the rise is due partly to families taking advantage of bargains. Tour operators have the price of some "off-peak" holidays. A family of four will save

more than £1,600 on a fortnight with Eclipse Holidays in a four-star hotel on Spain's Costa Brava by going in May rather than August. They would save almost a third on a Thomson Holiday in Turkey.

A head teachers' survey showed one secondary school lost more than 1,000 pupil days to holidays in the past year. David Hart, NAHT general secretary, said: "Promotion of cheap family holidays is a major factor."

Civil servants have been holding talks with the travel industry for several months after a joint intervention by Estelle Morris, School Standards Minister, and the Bangladeshi High Commissioner, to discourage Bangladeshis from

taking children out of school for family visits. Airlines serving Dhaka agreed not to raise fares during school holidays.

With head teachers reporting package holidays to be a growing cause of absenteeism, ministers hoped for a similar agreement with tour companies. The Association of British Travel Agents said yesterday that pricing changes were unlikely, being governed by demand. But it is issuing a suggested insert for brochures.

Children are allowed up to ten days away from school, at a head's discretion. Mr Hart said that increasingly parents were treating that as a right. Broken homes were also blamed, children taking main holidays with each parent.

### Shares reach five-month high

London shares sprang to a five-month high yesterday, shaking off a fears about Friday's introduction of the Euro. The FTSE100 jumped 74.3 points to 5941.5 in a performance which dealers dubbed the "Santa Claus Rally." In New York, shares leapt to just a few points short of their 1998 high.

#### Wet beginning

The north and west of Britain faces a wet and windy start to the year as thousands of people struggle to repair gale damage. Many homes in Scotland were without electricity for a third day.

### Agnew and the ecstasy as England win

By Peter Barnard

LATE December in Britain: the usual grim morning. Dark. Dull. Windy. To grey daylight. Commuters in cars, wondering why their turn to go to work in this particular week comes around every year. Not much comfort from Radio 4, where Sir MacGregor and James MacGregor are struggling with an unimpassioned agenda. Try Radio 5, where around 7.25am, the voices of the Test Match Special team, coming on a bell from 12,000 miles away, tell you that for 3 and need only 45 runs to win the

fourth Test in Melbourne. Humiliation looms. Sack the selectors. Sack the coach. Sack the players. Start writing English cricket's obituary. Again. Switch to a music station. Change lanes. How does even light holiday traffic cause tailbacks? Another 40 minutes pass. Switch back to the Test. Australia need 13 to win with three wickets in hand. Four wickets have fallen but it is too little, too late. Isn't it? Jonathan Agnew and Mike Selvey were at the microphones when it happened. Agnew has reported so much defeat that some call him Jonathan Agony. Now, Agnew reiterated for people

just tuning in how Australia had claimed the extra hour to finish off England yesterday. How Alec Stewart had protested in vain. The England bowlers are exhausted, Agnew said. This is ridiculous, he said. And then... Ecstatic cricket experiences are markedly different from more conventional theatres of ecstasy. In this particular case the foreplay lasted nearly three days even if the climax was more typically swift, starting with Dean Headley having Nicholson caught behind: 161 for 8. It was 8.26am. Suddenly in-car entertainment took on a whole new meaning. Darren

Gough steamed in, bowled MacGill for a duck and had McGrath leg before, also for a duck. England had won a Test match in Australia for only the second time in 13 years. The margin of victory was 12 runs; it felt like 1,200. At 8.33am, when England sealed victory, Agnew, Selvey and the travelling Barry Army were linked to thousands of drivers, one hand on the wheel and the other saluting the skies. Dumfries had turned into Normandy. And not an American in sight.

Leading article, page 17  
Match reports, pages 36, 37, 40





# Scots prepare to end feudal land system

Frazer Nelson reports on proposals to end eight centuries of dominance by aristocratic landowners

THE feudal land-owning system in Scotland is to be abolished under plans to be unveiled next week to help communities to buy land from the noble families that have controlled it since the Middle Ages.

The feudal structure will be replaced with a system to encourage community buyouts and end the secrecy surrounding private estates.

Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, will announce on Tuesday a series of measures designed to help villagers and crofters take more control of their land while making the lairds more accountable.

Landowners are to lose all feudal titles and privileges, including the relationship of "superior" to "vassal" which has survived in Scotland from the reign of David I

(1124-1153). However the Scottish Landowners' Federation, which represents 80 per cent of lairds, has already accused the Government of acting without popular support.

The changes will be recommended by the Land Reform Policy Group, a government committee chaired by Lord Sewel, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and the Environment.

Andrew Dingwall-Fordyce, the federation's convener, said: "The policy group received a pathetic 360 responses out of five million Scots, and that is not a mandate for change. I'm very much against politicians playing with people's lives

just to win a few votes." The reforms will be presented as the largest shake-up in land ownership since the Middle Ages, to be enacted when the Scottish parliament convenes in July. They are expected to centre on a new Land Fund, which would help bankroll community bids to buy their estates when the laird decides to sell.

All public information about private estates will be collated for the first time, updating the ancient Register of Sasines which has been keeping records since 1617.

Aristocrats remain one of the most powerful landowning forces in Scotland: almost 14 per cent of

the entire country is controlled by 21 nobles.

The Duke of Buccleuch, a Conservative Party activist and a descendant of Charles II, is Britain's largest private landowner, controlling 270,000 acres centred in Dumfries on the Scottish borders.

Captain Alwyn Farquharson owns 120,000 acres near Invercauld and estates bordering the Queen's Balmoral estate, the cornerstone of her 52,000-acre holding. The most powerful woman aristocrat is the Countess of Sutherland, whose ancestors carried out much of the Highland Clearances which are still blamed for the de-

population in rural Scotland. She owns 123,000 acres including the Dunrobin Castle.

Peter Peacock, convener of Highland Council, said that land reform would have happened sooner had it not been for fear that the House of Lords would side with the landowners.

He said: "We could never have got these reforms through at Westminster because the House of Lords would have opposed our root and branch. The Scottish Parliament will not have to answer to a second chamber, so the changes are only possible now."

The SNP, now Labour's largest

political opponent in Scotland, has said land reform will become the first measure passed by cross-party consensus. However, it has accused Labour of devising a "cheapskate" version with minimal cash for the Land Fund.

Rob Gibson, a member of the SNP's National Executive, said: "Lord Sewel may be well-meaning, but because he has ruled out major investment we will obviously get a botched project. But we have long argued for abolishing the tyranny of the feudal system, so we will be glad when it comes."

The feudal system, which still uses the terms "superiors" and "vas-

sals", will be looked at by the Scottish Law Commission which is keen to retain the concept of "real burdens" — guarantees that certain aspects of the estate will always remain unaltered.

Lord Sewel's committee is expected to recommend altering the land sale process, demanding that all deals are advertised for 30 days to give communities a chance to bid.

The Government could have the power to delay any sale by another 30 days if a community buyout team needed more time to piece its offer together.

All the reforms will remain recommendations until they are passed by the Scottish parliament.

Lairds' fear, page 25

## 'Severity test' will make waiting lists fairer, say doctors

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

PATIENTS needing an operation should be given a "severity score" to show how quickly they should undergo surgery, the British Medical Association says today.

Devising a system that takes into account social, clinical and quality of life factors would lead to a fairer, more transparent waiting list management system, a report says.

Guidelines would be drawn up for a wide range of operations so that a patient knew that the same priorities existed throughout the country.

The report says that a new method is needed because the Government's focus on reducing waiting lists has raised concerns in the profession that the clinical priority of patients is in danger of being forgotten.

Recent announcements of extra funds to reduce the num-

bers on waiting lists are likely to lead to the easier cases being brought forward, the report says. "This will certainly achieve the political wish for fewer people on the list in the short term but those remaining are likely to represent those with more complex conditions and quite likely those who have waited longer."

Since the Patient's Charter says no one should wait more than 18 months for an operation, someone with a very minor condition who has been on the list for that length of time may overtake someone with a greater clinical need simply to allow the hospital to meet the target. The report says that this could have expensive legal consequences if a patient "overtaken" subsequently dies because of the delay.

The report says there is scepticism over the accuracy of waiting lists published by the Health Department. A review of those waiting for more than six months usually shows that many patients have been referred elsewhere, some are better, some have died and others have moved away.

Scoring systems to set clinical priorities are being tried out in other countries. New Zealand is introducing a system which identifies which patients are likely to derive substantial health benefit, taking account of competing claims on resources.

The Canadian province of Ontario is piloting a system devised to identify which patients waiting for heart surgery have greatest need. Sweden has a scoring arrangement for cataract operations which takes into account the need for help or inability to work of the patient.

At Guy's Hospital in London surgeons graded 22 conditions to work out which were the most beneficial, taking into account clinical as well as quality of life factors and the availability of resources.

None of the systems so far tried is foolproof. The report says that factors such as shortage or inefficient use of resources, inappropriate referrals, out of date records and poor management all contribute to long waiting lists.

However, Peter Hawker, chairman of the BMA's consultants and specialist committee, is convinced of the need for change. "We must move away from the present focus on total numbers waiting for surgery and look at the clinical priority of those awaiting surgery," he said.

"I know that if patients understood why they were waiting, to let someone with a greater clinical need receive their surgery, then they would not mind the slightly longer wait they themselves may have to face."

He said that the long-term aim should be to ensure nobody waited more than a year for an operation, but even then it was essential that patients received surgery according to clinical need.

## More people use private hospitals

By OUR MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE income of private hospitals is estimated to have risen by 10 per cent this year as more people choose to pay for medical care.

Last year the income of independent hospitals and clinics rose 6 per cent to £1.425 billion, reports the authoritative *Laing's Healthcare Market Review*, which predicts this year's increase.

At present 13 per cent of elective operations are carried out in the private sector, an increase of 1 per cent over the year. Another 3 per cent of GP consultations are paid for privately, with a growing number of healthcare insurance companies providing cover for this kind of primary care.

"Most private hospital chains have experienced strong levels of demand in 1998," said William Laing, editor of the *Review*, which is published today. "It remains to be seen what impact any economic downturn in 1999 will have, but to date at least the Labour

Government does not seem to have dented demand for private healthcare."

"With the Government still struggling to control waiting lists, and with ever more visible rationing within the NHS, a significant and growing number of people continue to opt for private healthcare, paid for out of their own pockets if not by medical insurance."

But private nursing and residential homes are finding it increasingly difficult to survive. They earned £6.4 billion over the year but margins are so small that many homes serving the lower end of the market are in difficulty.

Local authorities are increasing their baseline fee rates by less than inflation, while staff shortages mean that home operators have to employ more expensive agency workers.

Homes catering for wealthier clients can charge up to £40 a week more than the fees which local authorities are willing to pay.

Elizabeth Major, the daughter of the former Prime Minister, shows off her engagement ring after becoming engaged to her long-term boyfriend, Luke Salter (Claudia Joseph writes).

Mr Salter, 26, a medical student, asked Miss Major, 27, a veterinary nurse, to marry him as they celebrated Christmas with her parents, John and Norma, at the family home in Great Stukeley, Cambridgeshire. It comes seven months after her brother James proposed on bended knee to Emma Noble, a television game show hostess,



## Major's girl accepts a discreet proposal

while on holiday in Monte Carlo.

The couple, who have lived together for two years, are expected to get married quietly when Mr Salter, a third-year student at Leicester University, qualifies as a doctor.

Although they have been dating for more than three years, they have managed to conduct their relationship discreetly. James, 24, and Miss Noble, 27, who resumes her stage role in the Ben Elton play *Popcorn* in February, are expected to have a more glittering affair when they marry next June.

Mr Major said yesterday: "Norma and I are absolutely delighted. It was the best Christmas present we could have possibly had. Luke will be a very welcome addition to the family."

Miss Major has known Mr Salter since she was a teenager, when she joined the Huntingdon Youth Orchestra. She played the clarinet and he played the French horn.

Mr Salter said that he had been planning to propose at Christmas for some time. "It's been no secret that I wasn't interested in anyone else and that we were going to be together. I had had the ring for about six weeks, but I had it planned for a long time. Both sets of parents were thrilled."

## Police urged to switch batons

NEW batons carried by thousands of police are strongly criticised today in a report by the Police Complaints Authority.

After a two-year study, the PCA raised questions over the safety of, and training for, two out of the three common designs issued by 43 forces in England and Wales to replace the old-fashioned wooden truncheon.

One of the new batons is the side-handled design adopted in two versions by 23 forces. The authority found that the 611-gram baton, the heaviest in service, led to more complaints than any other. A rigid version of the baton produced an average of 3.85 complaints per 1,000 officers in 1996-97 and 3.93 in 1997-98 while an extended version led 2.40 and 2.67 complaints.

The authority warns chief constables

Complaints body wants less dangerous design, writes Stewart Tendler

that officers need careful and frequent training for the weapons.

The Asp or Casco, a thin, extendable baton used by 19 forces led to 2.94 complaints per 1,000 officers in 1996-97 and 2.38 last year. The design can inflict more pain than other batons, and the authority also noted that the metal tip can become dangerously worn.

The authority found that forces using the Asp have trained their officers with American manuals that have not been properly amended for British policing

conditions and the authority wants that officers may have been trained too aggressively.

Although the authority does not call on forces to give up the extendable or side-handled batons the report found that a simple and lighter long baton, the Arnold, can "markedly reduce a force's complaints". It produced the lowest rate of complaint at 1.66 and 1.78 per 1,000 officers.

Only the Metropolitan police, Dorset, Essex, Northumbria and Staffordshire use the baton. The authority found that several have almost eliminated all complaints about the use of batons by having frequent training sessions.

Six small forces recorded no complaints about batons in 1997-98, including the Dorset force, which uses the Arnold.

## Solicitors try to spin their way into public's heart

By RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

SOLICITORS have turned to spin-doctors in an attempt to rid the profession of its staid and stuffy image and counter "fat cat" accusations.

The move follows findings from focus groups of lawyers who complained that their public image was of middle-aged male money-grabbers. As a result, the profession's governing body, the Law Society, is to pay £60,000 for public relations advice.

The focus groups also expressed concern that the esteem of the law and the profession had diminished at a time when lawyers had been under assault from Conservative and Labour governments over alleged abuses of legal aid.

A Law Society spokesman said yesterday: "The profession itself was concerned at the image that still persists. Solicitors are still seen as 'fat cats' and distant, who are rather out of date and remote from people's lives." He added: "We were

seen as conservative and dull, male and over 40. It is not the truth. The average solicitor is under 40 and is not a man who dresses in a pinstripe suit and speaks with a posh accent."

The Law Society, whose headquarters in Chancery Lane, London, is redolent of a Victorian gentlemen's club, has hired Biss Lancaster, whose clients include Shell and Eurofighter, to help to improve the profession's image and public standing.

## Bug hits cancer

A disarmed food bug could be used to target cancer cells, killing them while leaving healthy cells unharmed. Experiments in the US by Vion Pharmaceuticals have shown that *salmonella* bacteria, a major cause of food poisoning, can be made harmless and used to carry anti-cancer drugs into tumours, slowing their growth.

## BBC tops ratings

The BBC has been declared the winner in the Christmas ratings war. It trounced ITV to claim seven of the top ten most popular programmes over the weekend. The most watched television programme of the Christmas period was BBC's *EastEnders* on Bank Holiday Monday, which achieved an audience of 15.7 million.

## Battery pig ban

Marks & Spencer this week becomes the first retailer to impose a ban on all battery farmed pork products. The chain has outlawed any meat from pigs reared in stalls and tethered, a method which increases litter but which keeps sows confined in a "narrow metal pen while chained to a slatted concrete floor during pregnancy."

SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT.

Last week the children of Knaresborough celebrated the 150th Anniversary of their station as well as Christmas. [www.railtrack.co.uk](http://www.railtrack.co.uk)

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# Top restaurant is fined for its filthy kitchen

ONE of Delia Smith's favourite restaurants pleaded guilty yesterday to seven breaches of food hygiene and safety regulations.

The television cook is a regular customer at Brasted's, a cosy restaurant in the old part of Norwich. The restaurant is included in the *Good Food Guide* and the Michelin restaurant guide.

Sally Baits, representing Norwich City Council, said that environmental health inspectors had carried out a routine inspection at the restaurant on February 12, and in the upstairs kitchen had found encrusted debris of food, vegetable peelings, rice, eggshells, feathers, dirt and dust. They also found evidence of an established infestation of larder beetles, finding adult beetles and their larvae, known as woolly bears, in several areas. Miss Baits said that the inspectors found work surfaces broken and separating, floor tiles broken and encrusted with dirt and dust, and light fittings filthy. There were "extremely dirty" areas behind refrigerators and work units and, under some of the fittings, open floorboards had trapped considerable amounts of debris and grease.

**Bits of food, dust and beetle larvae were discovered by hygiene officials, reports Robin Young**

Miss Baits said the inspectors were told by the assistant chef and kitchen porter on duty that there was no probe thermometer to test the internal temperature of cooked food, and no regular schedule for cleaning or inspecting the refrigerators.

There was no soap at the staff handbasin, and the only towels were inside a cupboard and not accessible without reaching across equipment and food. Some packets of pulses found in a plastic ice-cream container in one cupboard were nearly five years beyond their best-before date and many of the grains had been attacked by insects. Malcolm Savoury, appearing for John Brasted, the restaurant's proprietor, said that his client accepted that standards in the kitchen had slipped while he was trying to expand his business. He said that Mr Brasted had opened his restaurant in 1985 and had made it one of the most highly reputed in Norwich. But he added: "It is extremely difficult as a restaurateur outside the main conurbations to make the sort of profit most of us would accept as normal in business."

He said that Mr Brasted had attempted to solve his financial problems by expanding his outside catering operations, and in particular by starting operation called Brasted's On The Park. Although Brasted's On The Park had created an increase in turnover, he said, it had not contributed to profits, but had taken a great deal of Mr Brasted's management time and attention. It had closed a month after the inspection at the restaurant.

Mr Savoury said that his client had taken immediate steps to remedy the situation. By mid-July it was accepted by Norwich's environmental health department that everything at the restaurant was satisfactory.

Mr Savoury said that Mr Brasted was in "very real fear" of the consequences that the prosecution and attendant publicity would bring. "There have been cancellations," he said.

Sentencing Mr Brasted's company, Fraser Morrison, the stipendiary magistrate, said that the penalties he imposed "have to be significant so that the message goes out to others with a duty to safeguard the public". He fined Brasted's Limited £350 on each of seven counts and awarded £1,200 towards the council's prosecution costs.



John Brasted at Norwich Magistrates' Court yesterday.

## Chefs back modified food ban

By NICK NUTTALL, ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

RAYMOND BLANC and Nico Ladenis are among leading chefs who yesterday backed the campaign for a five-year ban on the commercial growing of genetically altered crops.

A survey by Friends of the Earth of 23 chefs and restaurants in the *Good Food Guide* 1999 has found that 19 support calls for a ban. Only Michel Roux, of The Waterside Inn at Bray, Berkshire, declined to support the moratorium.

Shaun Hill, chef and proprietor of the Merchant House in Ludlow, Shropshire, and a member of Euro-Toques, a 2,500 strong group of chefs who aim to protect the flavour and quality of food, said: "It's about time the Government learnt from the mistakes of the past and stopped people messing about with our food."

The survey was prompted after the guide's editorial came out against gene-altered foods.

## Au pair's lawyer 'sat on evidence'

By RUSSELL JENKINS

THE lawyer who led Louise Woodward's defence team has said that he may have erred in holding back evidence that could have implicated the older brother of Matthew Eappen in the eight-month-old baby's death.

Harvey Silverglate, interviewed by the American magazine *Lawyers Weekly*, did not say what the evidence was, but said of Brendan Eappen, then aged 2½: "The issue of whether the older brother is well-behaved or not - that is relevant."

Miss Woodward, now studying for a law degree in London, was convicted last year of second-degree murder. The trial judge later changed the conviction to one of manslaughter and sentenced her to the 279 days she had served since her arrest.

Mr Silverglate said that the British au pair's lawyer had not raised the question of the Eappens' older child at the trial because they were confident that the jury would

"stick to the science" and acquit Miss Woodward.

But Frederic Ellis, the Eappen's solicitor, said that Mr Silverglate's comments were "totally improper". He added: "The Eappen family has suffered enough. They certainly don't need these aspersions cast on them. It is totally ridiculous to think Brendan repeatedly shook and inflicted a violent blow to Matty. It was Louise Woodward."

The interview comes as the Woodward camp prepares to contest a damages claim brought by Matthew Eappen's parents, Sunil and Deborah. The civil action is scheduled to be heard by a federal judge in Boston on January 4.

The Woodward family and their solicitors declined to comment on Mr Silverglate's remarks. Friends of the family, though, said that stories that Matthew Eappen may have been harmed in some way by his older brother were common to the run-up to Miss Woodward's trial.

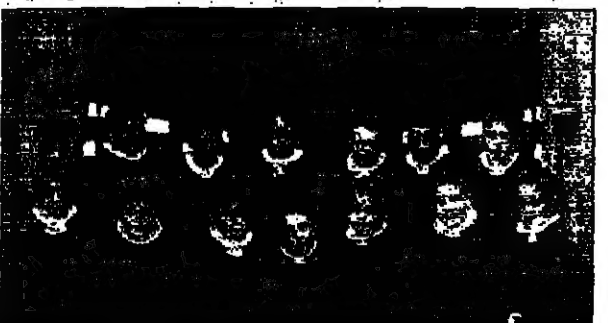
## Cathedral choir discord

By RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

CHOIRBOYS at Bristol Cathedral have signed a petition demanding that the new organist and choirmaster treat them "with fairness and respect".

The parents of one chorister have complained that the organist, Mark Lee, referred to individual choristers as "boy" and demanded silence when they were having their tea. Mr Lee, who joined the cathedral from Gloucester in September, was also accused of warning that "lost causes" would have to go if they failed to meet the high standards he was setting.

In their petition, which was presented to the Dean, the Very Rev Robert Grimley, in



Cathedral school choir: some members signed petition

November, the choristers called on Mr Lee to "work hard" or sang "solos" or split parts. They said Mr Lee should treat all choristers in the same way.

The father of one boy said: "The choir is a very unhappy place to be at the moment. I believe it all stems from the appointment of Mark Lee earlier this year. Our son and several other boys quickly became unhappy at his dictatorial style."

Dean Grimley said an inquiry had shown that Mr Lee had acted "perfectly properly" in every respect.



Face values: Joe Blackwood, below. Computer manipulation, above, moves Leonardo DiCaprio ever further from the scientific ideal of male perfection



## The man who thinks he is Mr Handsome

A STUDENT has sent his photograph to *The Guinness Book of Records*, demanding to be entered as the "best-looking man in the world".

Joe Blackwood concedes that his friends may have been pulling his leg when they persuaded him to write. But, raising an unabashed eyebrow, he said yesterday: "I have always known I was handsome: it was only recently that I got the desire to do something about it. I don't feel there is anybody who can out-do me for looks, not even stars like Leonardo DiCaprio, Richard Gere or Keanu Reeves."

He was certain that it was not his wit, sensitivity or intellect that was deterring the ladies, concluding, with the help of friends, that he was simply too good-looking to find a girlfriend.

Mr Blackwood, 29, of Gloucester, who was an amateur boxer and worked as a

**Helen Rumbelow and Simon de Bruxelles on a student's vain claim to fame**

mechanic before beginning a psychology degree 18 months ago, wrote to the publishers of the record book "to draw your attention to the fact that I am the most handsome man in the world and should be depicted and recorded in your book as this."

"I am taking the opportunity to present you with two photos as ultimate proof and I would like you to use the one that has been taken indoors next to the blue curtains."

A spokeswoman for Guinness Publishing said: "How

can you measure beauty? It is not measurable and therefore we would not be able to introduce a category for this."

According to American studies, a good-looking man must be above average height, have prominent cheekbones, a high forehead, a large jaw, a muscular torso, wrist and ankle symmetry, and a waist 90 per cent of his hip size. Apparently this type is picked out by women across the world.

A study published by *Nature* this year purportedly showed that most women found distinctively masculine features - such as heavy eyebrows, thin lips and large necks - unattractive, and preferred a softer face.

Whatever the pronouncements of scientists who seek to calibrate male beauty, they have never solved the problem that, for a man to be attractive, he must both be handsome and believe that he is not.

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# Tony Blair — has he got news for us

## WINNERS AND LOSERS IN THE BATTLE FOR COLUMN INCHES

THE LEADERS	
Tony Blair	28,958
Alastair Campbell	2,241
Cherie Blair	991
William Hague	5,981
Paddy Ashdown	79
Jane Ashdown	1,484

CABINET	
Gordon Brown	11,753
Robin Cook	6,861
John Prescott	6,402
Jack Straw	6,355
David Blunkett	3,258
Donald Dewar	3,221
Chris Smith	3,198
Lord Irvine of Lairg	3,067
No Howells	3,009
Frank Dobson	2,383
Margaret Beckett	2,134
George Robertson	1,558
Jack Cunningham	1,217
Stephen Byers	1,215
Clara Short	1,010
Nick Brown	785
Baroness Jay of Paddington	543
Alan Michael	534
Alan Milburn	501
Ann Taylor	427

OTHER LEADERS	
Peter Mandelson	6,323
Ron Davies	1,329
SHADOW CABINET	
Michael Howard	1,358
John Redwood	1,004
Francis Maude	815
Ann Widdecombe	763
Sir Norman Fowler	330
Andrew Maudsley	307
Liam Fox	237
Gillian Shephard	232
John Major	194
Sir George Young	184
Peter Alton	174
Lord Strathclyde	155
Tim Yeo	138
Gary Streeter	98
David Willetts	78
Iain Duncan Smith	77
Sir Nicholas Lyell	33
James Arbuthnot	29
Lord Kingsland	14

TONY BLAIR'S overwhelming dominance of British politics and his personal stamp on the Government is disclosed today in a survey of politicians' public impact.

In an indication of the Prime Minister's presidential style, Mr Blair's name appeared in 28,958 stories in national newspapers last year, more than double any other politician.

Second came the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, who was mentioned some 11,000 times. William Hague was referred to only 6,000 times.

The Times's survey was carried out by checking on computer databases of national newspapers the number of stories referring to each politician that appeared between January 1 and December 23 this year.

Reflecting the importance of the spin-doctors, Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's official spokesman, appeared in print over 2,000 times, more often than nine Cabinet ministers and all but two Tory frontbenchers.

Cherie Blair was mentioned some 900 times, usually as the Prime Minister's wife but on one in three occasions as the barrister Cherie Booth. Pflon Hague, the Tory leader's wife who has faced criticism for keeping a low profile, appeared just 79 times.

Jane Ashdown, wife of the Liberal Democrat leader, made just one appearance — on the guest list of a Windsor Castle banquet recorded in the Court Circular.

After Mr Blair and Mr Brown, the next most prominent ministers were Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Peter Mandelson, the former Trade and Industry Secretary, who all managed more than 6,000 mentions. Since Mr Mandelson's resignation last week, 384 stories including his name have appeared.

Ministers with the lowest

## James Landale, Hannah Betts and Elizabeth Judge assess press coverage of ministers

profiles included Ann Taylor, the Chief Whip; Alan Michael, the Welsh Secretary; and Nick Brown, the Agriculture Minister, who all appeared fewer than 1,000 times.

Harriet Harman managed 1,259 mentions until her dismissal as Social Security Secretary in July but since then there have been only 391 stories. David Clark's low profile as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster — 320 mentions — dropped to near-invisibility — 149 — since his sacking in July.

Ron Davies, the Welsh Secretary, appeared only 311 times before his resignation in October. But since the events of Clapham Common there have been 1,015 more stories.

Mr Hague's media profile has been so poor over the past year that his name appeared

only a few more times than Baroness Thatcher's. The Tory leader was mentioned 5,991 times, just 132 more than his long-retired predecessor.

The Liberal Democrats are also struggling to find the spotlight. Paddy Ashdown, appeared just 1,484 times.

The Shadow Cabinet rankings partly reflect the extent to which members have adapted to Opposition. Michael Howard, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, was mentioned 1,358 times. A close second is John Redwood, the media-hungry Shadow Trade and Industry Secretary, who appeared 1,004 times.

The rest of Mr Hague's frontbench team tailed off to near-invisibility, with most in the low hundreds. Liam Fox, the constitutional spokesman, appeared 237 times, but 45 stories were about his friendship with the pop singer Natalie Imbruglia. David Willetts, the Shadow Education Secretary, appeared just 78 times.

In the early running to become the Mayor of London, Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare is gaining the most publicity. The politician and author got his name into 1,526 stories, while Ken Livingstone was second with 1,182.

## TORIES' MAN IN THE SHADE



Lord Kingsland, the 56-year-old Shadow Lord Chancellor, left, appeared in print just 14 times, making him the most invisible member of the Shadow Cabinet. Most references come from voting lists. But five are for a minor brush with fame when the ex-Euro-MP — formerly Sir Christopher Proust — made a gaffe in October. In a debate on Lords reform, he appeared to suggest that the Tories might breach conventions and overturn a manifesto commitment of an incoming Government. The Tory leadership made him withdraw his remarks.



Albert and Daisy Bance meeting in Montreal for the first time since the First World War.

## Brother and sister get a grip on lost 80 years

FROM RICHARD CLERK IN OTTAWA

WHEN Daisy Bance finally got her hands on the brother she had not seen for 80 years she was understandably reluctant to loosen her grip.

A crowd of cameramen at Montreal International Airport pleaded with the couple to pose for a reunion picture. But she could only bury her face in his chest and say: "I don't want to let you go."

Albert Bance, 85, standing a foot taller than his older sister, embraced her and replied: "Here I am... I've been waiting for you for a lifetime."

The two were separated as children in Surrey after their parents died during the First World War, their father on the battlefield. They were sent to different orphanages and, in 1929, the young Albert, then 14, was shipped to Canada.

He was one of about 12,000 "home" children sent to Commonwealth countries, supposedly for a better life. Many were orphans; others were from broken homes.

After Albert arrived in Canada he went to work on a farm near South Stukely in the Eastern Townships, south of Montreal. He was an industrious boy and eventually became police chief and fire chief of nearby Waterloo, Quebec. He married, had five children and enjoyed a prosperous life. He has been a widower for three years and has 12 grandchildren, many of whom came to the airport to see the reunion with his sister.

It was one of the grandchildren, Todd Goyette, whose research on the Internet and

through birth records in England, brought his great-aunt to Canada. Mr Goyette and his wife, Deanna, sent letters to possible relatives in England and arrived on a visit two years ago in search of anyone with the surname Bance. They were directed to Surrey, the last known whereabouts of Mr Bance's sister, and found 23 people with that name including two Daisys. One of these, now living in Southampton, turned out to be the right one.

Mr Bance said that he had tried several times to locate his sister, but his efforts had always been rebuffed by the British Government, which until recently did not encourage former "home" children who wanted to trace their roots in Britain.

Miss Bance, who is also 85, never married and spent her working life in domestic service. The flight to Montreal, which she made with a friend, was her first trip in an aircraft. She had no trouble recognising her brother at the airport, apart from the crowd of reporters surrounding him, because he was wearing the tartan scarf she had knitted and sent to him.

They will spend a week together in Montreal and hope to begin arrangements to spend next Christmas together in England.

They are still looking for a younger sister, Frances, who may be still alive somewhere in Britain, although she also may have been sent to another Commonwealth country as a child.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Ex-borstal chief to run jails

A former assistant governor of a borstal is to be the next Director-General of the Prison Service.

Martin Naray, 43, will take over as head of the 135 jails in England and Wales in the spring when Richard Tilt retires. Mr Naray joined the Prison Service in 1982 as an assistant governor at Deerbolt borstal in Co Durham. From 1986 to 1989 he was an assistant governor at Frankland top-security jail in Durham.

Mr Naray, who is currently director of regimes for the service, conducted an inquiry this year into the murder of Billy Wright, the loyalist terrorist, in the Maze prison.

### Killing charges

Thomas Park, 24, an unemployed joiner of Kensington, Liverpool, has appeared at Liverpool Magistrates' Court accused of killing Sharon Lester, 22, and her daughter, Jade, 2, whose body was dumped in a bin bag on wasteland near her home in Kensington. He was also charged with burglary, and remanded in custody.

### Prison play

One of the men wrongly convicted of the murder of the newspaper boy Carl Bridge, water has written a play about his experiences in prison. Jim Robinson's drama *Just Not Fair* will be staged at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre next month. Robinson, 64, served 18 years in jail after being found guilty in 1979.

### Murder charges

A 28-year-old woman appeared in court charged with murdering two of her children. Julie Ferris is accused of killing eight-month-old Brandon in May this year and Hayley, also eight months, in 1993. Ferris, of Aston, was refused bail by magistrates in Birmingham and will return to court next month.

### Baby's life saved

A woman saved her year-old granddaughter's life when she diagnosed meningitis after a rash on the toddler's arm failed to go away when she pressed an empty glass against it. Doctors at Southampton General Hospital, where Sadie Belbin is recovering, said that the actions of Pam Belbin, 41, had probably saved the child.

### Parking death

Lillian Salmon, 82, died from head injuries received when her sister's husband reversed out of a parking space at Rickmansworth Aquadrome, Hertfordshire. Police said it was not clear if she was struck by the car or fell into its path. Mrs Salmon, of Ruislip, West London, had been spending Christmas with the couple.

### Luggage track

British Airways is to put computer chips into baggage labels to try to reduce the number of suitcases that go missing in transit. The system, which will use pinhead-sized transmitters linked to a central computer, will be tested for two months on baggage to Heathrow from Manchester and Munich.

### Rowing museum

The storylines and text for exhibitions at the River and Rowing Museum, Henley (article, November 4) are the work of the curators, Jane Bowen, Simon Chambers, Emily Leach and Christopher Dodd.

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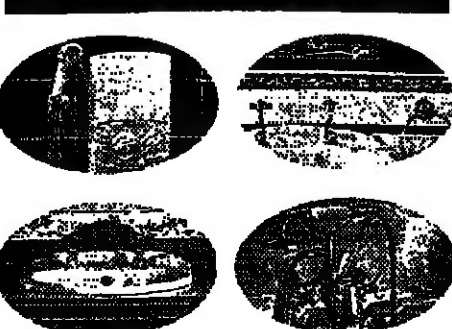


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## Ministers clash over badger cull decision

BY JILL SHERMAN  
CHIEF POLITICAL  
CORRESPONDENT

TWO Whitehall departments are heading for a clash over the fate of Britain's badgers.

In August the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food decided to go ahead with a random cull of the animals to assess their role in spreading tuberculosis among cattle. But Michael Meacher, the Environment Minister, is determined to stop it, arguing that they should be protected.

Jeff Rooker, the Food Safety Minister, announced plans to kill 12,000 badgers over five years while Mr Meacher, who had opposed the scheme, was on holiday in August. The move was in response to a scientific report which, though inconclusive about the role of badgers in spreading TB in cattle, recommended a trial cull.



Meacher opposes cull

Under the £6-million scheme, which started last month and is to cover about 30 areas in Britain, three different experiments are being carried out at each site.

The only trial to have gone ahead so far is in Cornwall and Devon. In the first experiment, badgers are culled at Poldoc, where a cattle herd

has been infected; in the second, they are culled in Hartland, where there is no infection; and in the third, in Bude, none are killed. The badgers are lured into a cage by a poisoned bait, and their bodies collected and examined.

Mr Meacher wants the cull put on hold pending a scientific review of its impact on the badgers. The all-party Select Committee on Agriculture is to hold its own inquiry into the trial's design and likely effectiveness next month.

It is still unclear whether badgers originate TB or contract it from cattle. Mr Meacher argues that it is difficult to defend killing badgers where there is no evidence of disease. About 400 farms in England and Wales are under restrictions due to TB outbreaks in cattle. Farmers blame the badger population, which has risen to almost 400,000.



# Yemen: a land tormented by tribal strife

Michael Binyon describes a nation blessed by a rugged beauty but threatened by a savage tradition

YEMEN, a legendary land of spices, narcotics and tribal feuds, has changed little in a thousand years. It is still dominated by Islamic custom, tribal warfare, poverty and its rugged, spectacular mountains.

Fighting and kidnapping are customs that go back centuries. But the civil war of 1994, the growth of Islamic fundamentalism and the development of an oil industry have led to an explosive political mix that now threatens not only the growing tourist industry but the stability of one of the oldest countries in the Middle East.

The botched attempt to storm the kidnappers' base follows a recent decision by a frustrated Government in Sanaa to get tough with tribesmen who have increasingly mocked its authority by seizing more than 100 foreigners in the past six years.

The Government recently announced the introduction of the death penalty for kidnapping — a threat that carries little weight in a country with an estimated 50 million Kalashnikov guns in circulation. But its decision to send in security forces to free the hostages has been dictated as much by political feuding as by the need to confront the tribesmen demanding ever higher pay-



Queen of Sheba part of Yemen's rich folklore

ments to improve schools, roads and infrastructure.

Yemen, historically known as "Arabia Felix", is the legendary home of the Queen of Sheba and was an important transit point on the spice route to the East. But with 16 million people — a dense population growing at 3.7 per cent — it is one of the poorest countries in the region, with an average income of only about £165 a year and an unemployment rate of 35 per cent. Oil development is still small, hampered by the attacks on pipelines by disgruntled tribesmen. On Saturday they blew up the main export pipeline, which carries about 50,000 barrels a day. It was the 19th attack since June.

North Yemen was occupied by the Turks until 1918 and the south — known as Aden — by the British until 1967. Since the bloody British withdrawal, the country has been plagued by revolutions and civil wars. The feudal north fought a medieval civil war in the 1960s, with republican rebels back by Egyptians sent in by Nasser and those loyal to the deposed imam backed by the Saudis. After the British withdrawal, an unstable Marxist state was set up in what became the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south, and there were frequent border clashes, assassinations and riots.

North and South Yemen agreed to a merger in 1990, but the armed forces did not integrate. Growing tensions and complaints in Aden that the city was starved of investment and that southerners were being kept out of power in Sanaa culminated in the declaration of a separate southern state in 1994 by Vice-President Ali Salem al-Baidh. A two-month civil war culminated in a crushing defeat for the south and the flight into exile of all the rebel leaders.

Since then the Yemeni Government has struggled to reimpose its authority. A million Yemenis were summarily expelled from Saudi Arabia after



A gun market where Yemeni tribesmen stock up their arsenals. The country is said to have 50 million Kalashnikov rifles in circulation

Yemen voiced support for Saddam Hussein in 1990, and their presence as well as the sudden end to remittances threw the economy into disarray. Border clashes with the Saudis also broke out over territory that has been disputed for the past 60 years.

The 1994 war left lasting wounds and resentment against Sanaa among southern tribesmen around Aden and in the neighbouring Abyan province. The Government faced a growing challenge from Islamic militants. Sanaa tried to re-establish its power in the south by setting up Islamic Jihad, a shadowy movement suspected of assassinating remaining separatists. It also sent in security forces to shell the strongholds of tribesmen holding foreigners, usually those from the West whose governments are likely

to put pressure on Sanaa for their release.

Last August a three-day meeting of 1,500 Yemeni tribal leaders in Sanaa promised an end to kidnapping and violence. But with loyalties changing swiftly in the rugged countryside, the Islamists who seized the Britons appear now to be in league with tribesmen

in confronting the Government and trying to force the release of a militant who was captured when security forces overran a military training camp in Abyan.

The present Government came to power after elections generally considered fair, and has tried to mend relations with the West. But Yemeni so-

cietly is still violent, governed by old notions of honour. All men carry curved daggers in their belts, which are freely used to settle blood feuds. Most chew qat, a mild narcotic plant inducing feverish activity followed by long periods of lethargy.

The medieval architecture of Sanaa, a well preserved city

700 years old and a world heritage site, coupled with spectacular scenery has brought a growing number of tourists who now earn Yemen more than £60 million a year. But this is likely to decline sharply after the spate of kidnappings and yesterday's killings.

Leading article, page 17

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£50,000+	6.80	6.80	6.20	6.20
£20,000+	6.50	6.50	6.10	6.10
£10,000+	6.20	6.20	6.00	6.00
Monthly Income Option				
£100,000+	7.10	6.80	6.50	6.31
£50,000+	6.80	6.74	6.20	6.17
£20,000+	6.50	6.60	6.10	6.03
£10,000+	6.20	6.50	6.00	5.94
<b>90 DAY GOLD</b>				
£100,000+	6.50	6.50	6.00	6.00
£50,000+	6.00	6.00	5.50	5.50
£20,000+	5.50	5.50	5.25	5.25
£10,000+	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
£5,000+	5.00	5.00	4.50	4.50
Monthly Income Option				
£100,000+	6.50	6.31	6.00	5.84
£50,000+	6.00	5.84	5.50	5.46
£20,000+	5.50	5.60	5.25	5.13
£10,000+	5.00	5.37	5.00	4.89
£5,000+	5.00	4.89	4.50	4.22
<b>1 YEAR GOLD</b>				
£100,000+	5.00	5.00	4.50	4.50
£50,000+	4.50	4.50	4.20	4.20
£20,000+	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
£10,000+	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
£5,000+	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
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£20,000+	4.00	4.55	4.00	3.93
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£50,000+	3.00	3.00	2.75	2.75
£20,000+	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.50
£10,000+	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
£5,000+	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
Monthly Income Option				
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£50,000+	3.00	3.11	2.75	2.80
£20,000+	2.50	2.80	2.50	2.50
£10,000+	2.00	2.50	2.00	2.00
£5,000+	1.50	2.00	1.50	1.50
<b>ASSET RESERVE CHEQUE ACCOUNT</b>				
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£25,000+	5.00	5.00	4.80	4.80
£10,000+	4.50	4.50	4.45	4.45
£5,000+	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80
£1,000+	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
<b>ADVANCE ISA</b>				
£20,000+	6.50	6.75	6.25	6.25
£10,000+	6.00	6.75	6.00	6.00
£5,000+	5.50	6.00	5.50	5.50
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£5,000+	6.00	6.00	5.50	5.50
<b>HALIFAX FUNDING ACCOUNT</b>				
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£5,000+	3.75	3.75	3.25	3.25
Monthly Income				
£10,000+	4.25	4.17	3.75	3.69
£5,000+	3.75	3.59	3.25	3.11
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£50,000+	5.75	5.75	5.25	5.25
£25,000+	5.25	5.30	4.90	4.90
£10,000+	4.75	5.00	4.60	4.60
Monthly Income Option				
£100,000+	6.25	5.60	5.25	5.13
£50,000+	5.75	5.18	4.80	4.79
£25,000+	5.00	4.89	4.60	4.51
£10,000+	4.25	4.65	4.55	4.46
<b>ADVANCE Saver</b>				
£1+	4.35	4.35	3.75	3.75
<b>CLOSED ISSUES</b>				
(Not available to new customers)				
TESSA Gold	7.05	7.05	6.55	6.55
Halifax TESSA	6.50	6.50	6.00	6.00

POINTS TO NOTE: AER stands for Annual Equivalent Rate and illustrates what the interest rate would be if interest was paid and compounded each year. Interest will be paid net after the lower rate of income tax (currently 20%) has been deducted unless you have completed a registration form and made a declaration to comply with Inland Revenue regulations. The net rates shown, which are only examples and have been rounded, assume the lower rate of income tax has been taken off. All interest rates quoted may change. Special rates of interest on certain accounts paid to savings customers who appear in our records as being under 21, if your savings or Credit Card or Halifax Current Account balance is less than £50 you will not receive any interest unless you appear in our records as being under 21 (under 18 for Credit Card, under 18 or a student for Halifax Current Account). Full account conditions and details of when interest is paid, and how to qualify for the TESSA Gold, Halifax TESSA 2, Bonus Gold and Monthly Saver bonuses, are available from any Halifax branch.



Halifax plc, Trinity Road, Halifax 30th December 1998

## Bloody end surprises envoy

VICTOR HENDERSON, the British Ambassador to Yemen, initially played down the danger to the hostages' lives, telling radio and television interviewers yesterday morning that he was confident they would be safe (Michael Binyon writes). He told the BBC Radio 4's Today programme that the chance of being kidnapped in Yemen was no different from that of being mugged in London. By the afternoon four Britons were dead.

Mr Henderson, an Arabic speaker who has served also in Jerusalem, Bahrain

and Helsinki, has had to deal with two kidnapping incidents involving Britons, including a BBC crew, since he arrived in Sanaa in 1995. "Going on previous form, they are treated well," he told Sky News.

His early confidence followed talks with Yemen's Minister of the Interior, which said that the Government knew where the hostages were and had reports that they were safe. The Foreign Office, which also had talks with Hussein al-Amri, Yemen's Ambassador to Britain, was quietly confident at first. Both the For-

eign Office and the Embassy in Sanaa were taken aback by the bloody end to the issue. Urgent questions were being asked last night why the Sanaa Government decided to storm the kidnappers' hideout. It had earlier assured Germany that it would not use force to free four Germans kidnapped earlier this month.

British authorities may not have been told that this time the kidnappers were politically motivated and were a greater threat than the tribesmen who normally want only money or cars.

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# World is a far more disastrous place to be

Nick Nuttall on an insurance industry audit of global strife

LARGE-SCALE natural disasters are three times as common as they were in the 1960s, experts said yesterday as they declared 1998 the most calamitous year on record.

Damage from catastrophic storms and floods is also costing many billions of pounds more, according to Munich Re, one of the biggest re-insurance companies, which has been monitoring natural disasters for a quarter of a century.

A spokesman for the company, which advises the rest of the insurance industry, said yesterday: "Comparing the figures for the 1960s and the last ten years, we have established that the number of great natural catastrophes was three times larger. The cost to the world's economies, after adjusting for inflation, is nine times higher and for the insurance industry three times as much."

Some experts claim that the rising rate of natural catastrophes is making more parts of the globe uninsurable, especially in low-lying areas in the Pacific, Asia and the Caribbean.

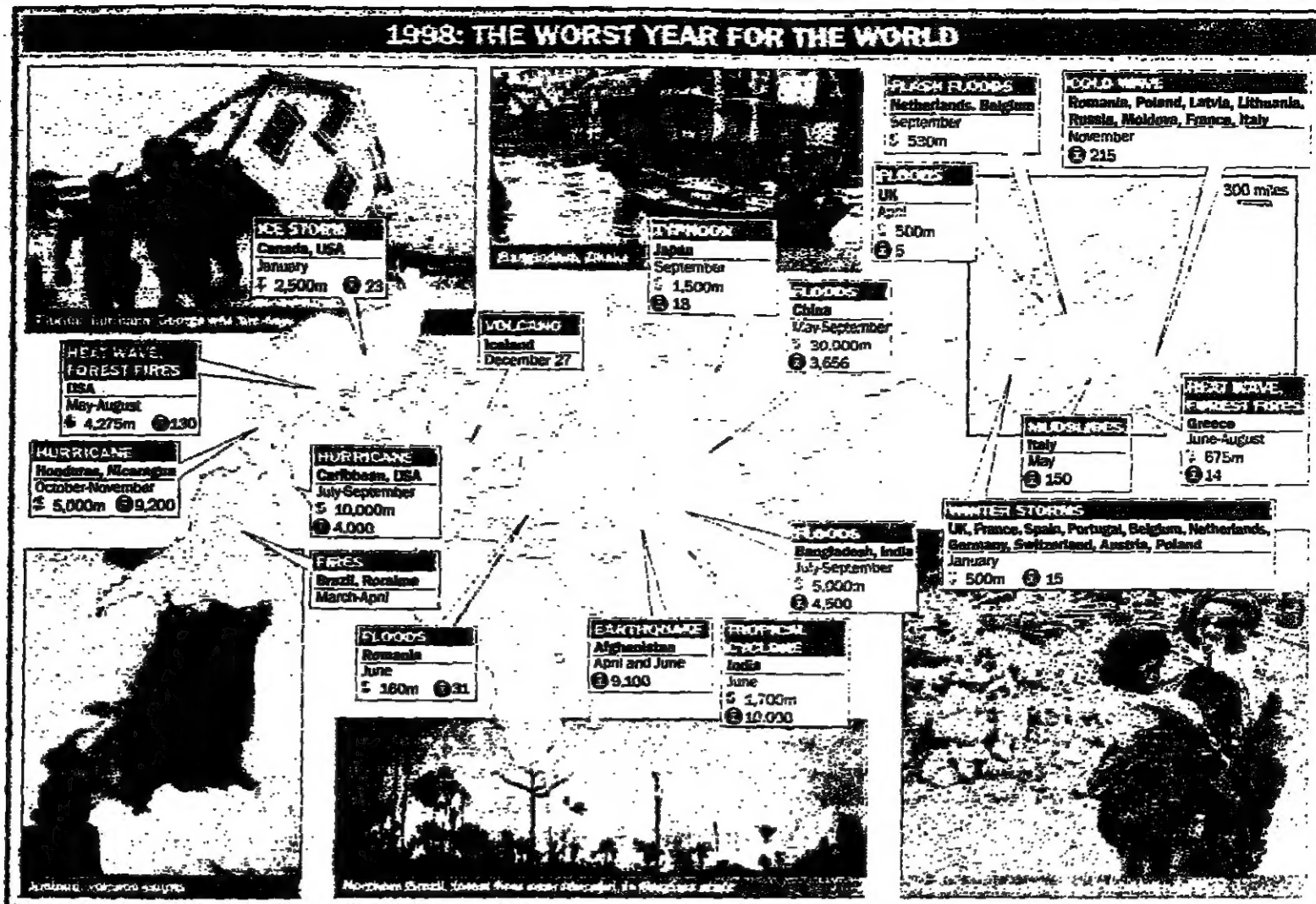
Figures for this year, released yesterday, show that more than 700 so-called "large-loss events", which killed an estimated 50,000 people, struck across the globe.

The most frequent natural catastrophes in 1998 were windstorms, of which there were 240 significant ones, and floods, of which there were 170. They accounted for 85 per cent of the economic losses. In 1995, the previous most calamitous year, there were 100 fewer "large-loss events". Last year there were 538.

The most recent natural disaster was caused by Hurricane Mitch, which hit Central America and especially Honduras and Nicaragua killing an estimated 9,200 people and costing \$5 billion (£3.1 billion) in uninsured and \$150 million (£94 million) in insured losses.

Europe was also plagued with costly natural disasters, the biggest being put on higher than average winter temperatures triggering extreme weather. The biggest uninsured losses in Europe in 1998 are believed to have been caused by the heatwaves and forest fires that hit Greece between June and August. These are estimated to have cost the country \$675 million.

The biggest insured losses, costing \$530 million, were in the Netherlands and Belgium in September. Second, at \$500 million, was the damage



caused by the storms that swept Europe in January.

That loss was equalled by the floods in Britain in April which cost \$500 million, triggering insurance claims of \$250 million.

The big rise in natural disasters this year is being blamed on rising global temperatures aggravating changes to La Niña, a climatic cycle in the Pacific that follows El Niño and spawns heavy rains in Asia.

Dr Gerhard Herz, the head of the geoscience research centre at Munich Re, said that economic loss and human misery would rise further if global warming continued in line with scientists' forecasts.

Dr Herz, whose company has been monitoring the level and cost of natural disasters since the late 1960s, said: "A further advance in man-made climate change will almost invariably bring us increasingly extreme natural events and consequently increasingly large catastrophe losses."

The progress achieved at the fourth climate summit in Buenos Aires at the beginning of November is not enough to halt global warming and stabilise the world's climate in the long term. "If the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, Japan, which cost \$100 billion, is removed from the statistics, then 1998 also becomes the most expensive year on record for all kinds of natural disasters."

Most of this year's storms and floods hit poor, uninsured parts of the globe, so the loss to the insurance industry is forecast to be less, at about \$15 billion. But that figure is up from \$4.5 billion in 1997 and continues a rising trend.

## Night in the open for dog's best friend

By Gillian Harris  
SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

A HILLWALKER had to spend the night outdoors in sub-zero temperatures when his tired dog put him in danger of falling down a mountainside.

Nick Trimmer, 34, used an ice pick to dig a snow hole for himself and his Border collie near the summit of Ben Oss in Stirling when it became apparent that the dog could not keep its footing. Mr Trimmer feared that Benji, who was on a lead, would pull him over the mountainside if it slipped in the dark.

As he settled down for an uncomfortable night on the 1,020ft mountain with Benji huddled inside his jacket, Mr Trimmer was unaware that his wife had reported him missing when he failed to return home in Edinburgh.

His disappearance caused a search by mountain rescue teams and an RAF helicopter that was not called off until Mr Trimmer, an outdoor pursuits instructor, strolled into the village of Tyndrum at the mountain foot yesterday.

He said later: "We were coming back down when we had some difficulties. Benji was unable to get back down because the hill was so icy. I reckoned if the dog slipped it would take me with it."

"I suppose the moral of the story is that you should not take your dog with you when you are going up a hill."

## More storms blowing in for the New Year

By Joanna Bale  
Gillian Harris  
and Audrey Magee

THE north and west of Britain face a wet and windy start to the new year as thousands of people struggle to repair damage wrought by Christmas gales. Many homes in Scotland and Ireland were without electricity for a third day yesterday as the Met Office warned of more storms.

"Another weather system is brewing up to the west, bringing more wind and a band of rain crossing Ireland during Thursday into western England and west Wales," a spokesman said. "Hogmanay is likely to be wet and windy, especially in the northwest which will see winds of up to 50mph. We are not expecting anything like the Christmas gales, although there could be more damage."

The electricity company ScottishPower came under at-

### BOYFRIEND KILLED

Michael Joyce, the Irish international showjumper, killed when a tree fell on his car in a storm on Boxing Day, was driving his girlfriend, Samantha Smith, to a waterfall at Omeishan, Co Galway, where he intended to propose.

"No amount of weasel words can excuse their complete and absolute incompetence," he said.

A ScottishPower spokesman said: "The vast majority of homes affected were reconnected very soon afterwards. There are still problems affecting rural communities and we are doing our utmost to address them." In areas without electricity, ScottishPower has provided generators for retirement homes, farms, hotels and kidney dialysis machines.

In Ireland, gale-force winds and heavy rain yesterday hampered attempts to restore power. About 15,000 houses in the Irish Republic and 3,000 homes in Northern Ireland were still without electricity.

The Association of British Insurers has estimated that £10 million will be paid out for Christmas storm damage.

Forecast, page 20

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New interest rates for Direct Line Instant Access account effective from 1st January 1999.

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£10,000 - £24,999	6.20	6.03
£25,000 - £49,999	6.25	6.08
£50,000 - £99,999	6.35	6.17
£100,000+	6.50	6.31

Previous interest rates for Direct Line Instant Access account.

BALANCE	PREVIOUS INTEREST RATES	
	PAID ANNUALLY (GROSS %)	PAID MONTHLY (GROSS %)
£1 - £4,999	5.50	5.37
£5,000 - £9,999	5.85	5.70
£10,000 - £24,999	6.70	6.50
£25,000 - £49,999	6.75	6.55
£50,000 - £99,999	6.85	6.64
£100,000+	7.00	6.79



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EVOLVING TO COMPETE IN EUROPE



# Right plays race card in euro battle

FROM ROGER BOYES  
IN BERLIN

PROPERTY developers are at work throughout the Brandenburg lake district grafting new housing estates on to run-down villages, slapping up hypermarkets, creating a dozen satellite townships in a web around the once and future German capital of Berlin.

The political effects of this building boom are well known. Construction companies can only meet their tight deadlines if they run round-the-clock shifts. German workers are too expensive, so the environs of Berlin are being pieced together by cheap Ukrainians, Poles, the English and the Irish.

The local youth, with official unemployment rates of 20 or more per cent — and real rates at 30 per cent — are turning on the foreigners. Black Englishmen in particular have been beaten up, even crippled by these resentful thugs. Vietnamese shrewd traders who are making fortunes selling cheap cigarettes, have been set on fire. This is no longer the region celebrated by the novelist, Theodor Fontane, or Johann Sebastian Bach: today the Brandenburg concertos resonate to dark chords.

All this anger, bottled in over the winner like a potent home brew, is likely to explode next year. The critical questions are whether and when the anger will be directed at the euro, whether the far right parties will be able to mop up the discontent in the East and channel it, in time perhaps for June's European elections, against the new currency.

The National Party of Germany (NPD), the Republicans and the German People's Union — which whipped up more than 13 per cent of the vote in

## FAULTLINES



Saxony-Anhalt last autumn after a mere three-week campaign — are positioning themselves for a euro protest. For the past year their demonstrators have brandished "Save the Mark" placards along with a more obvious "Foreign criminals go home".

Partly this is tactical: it is more respectable in German political culture to be patriotically in favour of the mark than to be openly racist. Partly it reflects a genuine division within German society. Popular approval for the euro is creeping up — it has just edged over 50 per cent — but in the East nobody is budging. Over half of East Germans are firmly against the euro, only a third are in favour.

The mark was a symbol of unity. It was a promise from the West that it would share its prosperity with the East. The decision to adopt the euro is regarded as Western Diktat. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, of the Allensbach opinion survey institute, gives a clue as to how disenchantment with the West has taken root.

Her latest poll, conducted last September, asks Germans: "Do you believe that West Germans want to help

the East?" Only 32 per cent of East Germans held this opinion and 47 per cent firmly disagreed.

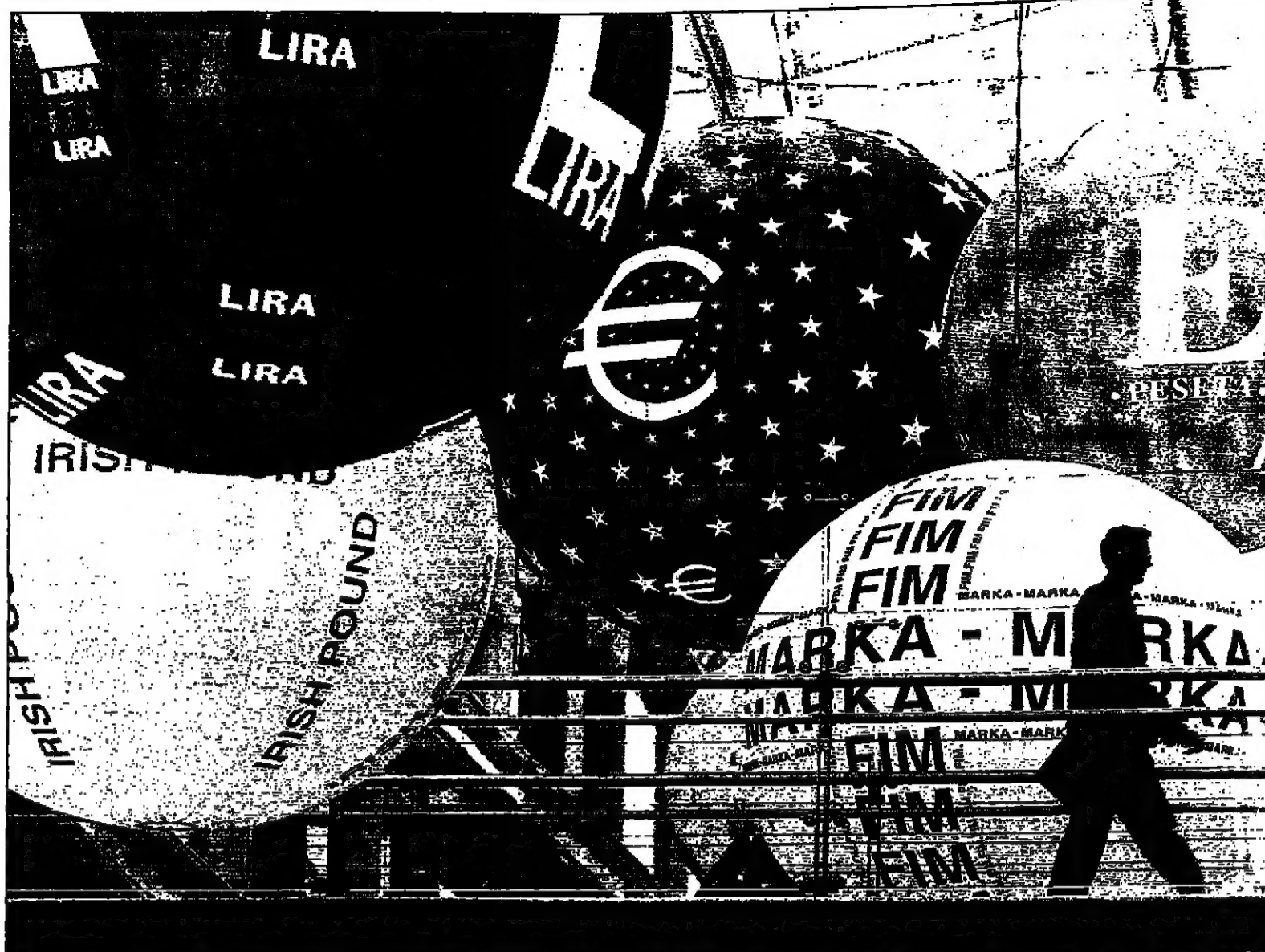
Eastern Germans are probably right to be wary of the euro. The new common currency will expose the inefficiency of rustbelt industries. Naturally old communist plants have been closed down or remodelled and modernised — but shipyards and heavy industry can still barely survive without heavy subsidies from Bonn and Brussels.

It is reasonable to assume that the first, or at least the major, victim of European Monetary Union will be Germany, saddled with its high labour and welfare costs. East Germans know exactly what is coming: foreign direct investment has been leap-frogging over eastern Germany into western Poland, which is growing visibly richer by the day.

Here, then, is the witches' brew. There will be a tension between a Germany perceived by its neighbours as being rich — and obliged in a full monetary union to make transfer payments to the impoverished south — and yet perceiving itself as a land of spreading poverty.

This is a classic trawling ground for the fishermen of the Far Right, comparable to the recruiting atmosphere of the 1930s. And so, at precisely the moment when Europe is supposed to be integrating more closely, the divisions between East and West will become more apparent.

Even the proponents of the euro see it as a modernising device — look how it helped to keep budgets under control — and accept that monetary union could become a saviour. Necessary reforms of Germany's labour costs will be blamed squarely on EMU institutions rather than on the German Government.



Illuminated balloons representing currencies of the countries joining the euro from Friday in the Parisian financial district yesterday

stitutions rather than on the German Government.

The German resistance to the euro is not of course confined to the East. Nor is it the exclusive catchment area of the Far Right. Pensioners remain nervous — though notably less so since the accession of a Social Democratic Government — and so do small businesses. It is precisely the small and medium-sized company, making up the so-called *Mittelstand*, which is supposed to generate jobs, specially in the East.

The trend of big business in euroland is already clear: towards mega mergers that end up with job cuts. Yet small business in the East was led to believe that the euro would be as strong as the mark. The

new Government preaches a soft euro, the European Central Bank a hard one: the confusion is destroying the trust of the entrepreneurs who, as a result, are having reservations about hiring more workers.

The political articulation of

spective. Far left parties are also against the euro and it is remarkable in the East how many far right voters have moved for tactical reasons towards supporting the ex-communist Party of Democratic Socialists. This may become a

**'Patriotically, it is more respectable to back the mark than to be racist'**

euro discontent is a complex calculation. Germany's far right parties failed to get into parliament in the general election in September, and their present unity over the euro is a brittle one. But the opposition has to be seen in a broader per-

spective. Far left parties are also against the euro and it is remarkable in the East how many far right voters have moved for tactical reasons towards supporting the ex-communist Party of Democratic Socialists. This may become a

Manfred Brunner, Germany's veteran eurosceptic cam-

paigner — he challenged the Maastricht Treaty in the courts — has just resigned from the leadership of his party, the Alliance of Free Citizens, because it has been making common cause with the Far Right as part of an anti-euro crusade.

As German conservatives seek to position themselves and sharpen their opposition to an over-regulated European Union, they run this risk: that they will be trotting some way behind the pacemaker of the neo-Nazis. That risk is evident in many continental European cultures. The question is: how does one oppose the euro without appearing to be a fascist sympathiser?

Burkhard Schröder, a sharp observer of the far right scene,

sees how the categories of political protest are blurring in the East. "Quite simply, the East is different. Here it is fashionable to be on the Right. In the schools that I visit in the East, I see boys with dreadlocks who claim to be National Socialists because it is cool. Kids who sympathise with the Left choose to keep quiet about it and claim to be right-wing."

The new currency, billed as a job creator, may well in the short term be a job killer. If other factors come in to play — a Kosovo crisis, say, propelling hundreds of thousands of refugees onto German borders — then the admission of illegal immigration, high unemployment and an uncertain currency will upset all the traditional political calculations.

## City cancels new year parties

By MICHAEL HARVEY

WHILE most of Britain is struggling with a hangover on New Year's Day, 30,000 workers in the City of London will be getting to grips with a new era in international finance.

In offices across the capital, foreign exchange dealers and investment bankers will be hunched over their screens overseeing the birth of the euro.

Many employees will actually see the new year in at

their computer terminals as they take part in overnight tests of the conversion systems. Nervous City institutions have been practising for months for the big day, with most companies running several dress rehearsals.

Operations centres and "war rooms" have been set up, camp beds arranged in basement "rest areas" and personnel appointed to handle all conceivable crises.

One problem will be getting into work on what is normally

a bank holiday. The Corporation of London has arranged for the Waterloo and City underground line to open especially. It will also waive parking charges.

Taxi firms will have a new year bonanza with thousands travelling in by cab, many in the early hours of the morning.

Most City institutions are taking no chances with transport and have block-booked hotels near the City for their key personnel.

Catering for the 30,000 employees is another headache for City companies and most firms will be running in-house canteens at full stretch.

The costs of the euro conversion for the City runs into hundreds of millions of pounds. The Bankers' Trust investment house alone is said to have spent £60 million gearing up.

At Threadneedle Street, the Bank of England will have 300 staff working around the clock to convert its own systems.

## Dawn of the new currency heralds period of uncertainty on markets

By ANNE ASHWORTH

THE countries that will be adopting the euro in the first wave of Economic and Monetary Union are Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Republic of Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

They will form a single currency zone, dubbed euroland, a territory of nearly 300 million people, accounting for

19.4 per cent of the world's GDP. Euroland will be the world's largest importer and exporter.

Where Britain stands Britain and Denmark negotiated opt-outs, letting them decide on EMU membership. A British decision will rest on a referendum and economic tests.

How the currency works At midnight on January 1, 1999, the euro becomes a cur-

rency in its own right and will begin to be used for payments both by businesses and consumers. The exchange rate of each EMU member's currency to the euro will be permanently fixed. Euro banknotes and coins will be introduced from January 1, 2002. They will circulate with national currencies for up to six months. The euro is now 70p, but this could change while Britain remains outside EMU.

The effect on the pound Nobody knows exactly how the pound will be affected. Some believe dealers may drive down the euro by piling in to sterling or the dollar. Others believe the pound may weaken while things pick up on the Continent. The euro will end some massive currency fluctuations in Europe. Tomorrow the effect on prices

The euro and me, page 25

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# Top Khmer Rouge leaders say sorry

FROM CAROLINE GLUCK IN PHNOM PENH

SENIOR Khmer Rouge leaders have apologised, for the first time, for the suffering they caused when an estimated 1.7 million people died during the movement's reign of terror between 1975 and 1979.

Speaking at a news conference in Phnom Penh, Khieu Samphan, 67, the former nominal leader of the Khmer Rouge, and Nuon Chea, 71, the movement's chief ideologue, said they regretted what had happened.

Asked if he felt remorse for the suffering caused during the Khmer Rouge's period of power, Mr Khieu Samphan replied: "Yes, sorry, very sorry." Mr Nuon Chea, known as Brother No 2 in the movement — led by Brother No 1, Pol Pot, who died in the jungle last April — also apologised. "Naturally we are sorry: not only for the lives of the people, but also for the animals. They all died because we wanted to win the war."

But neither would talk

about their roles in the past — and brushed off suggestions that they should stand trial before an international tribunal for crimes against humanity.

"Please, let the Cambodian people and nation resolve its problems. And as I just tell you, 'Let bygones be bygones' is the best solution for our country because it is the only way to reach national reconciliation."

## US pledges trial for genocide architects

Washington: The US Government said yesterday that it would continue to work to bring the two former Khmer Rouge leaders to justice (Ian Brodie writes).

"Justice in Cambodia has long been delayed but must not now be denied," said Lee McClellan, the State Department spokesman. He noted

that the Cambodian Government had made several requests to the international community in the past 18 months for help in bringing the Khmer Rouge leaders to trial. The US hoped that the "apparent surrender" of Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea marked the first step in bringing them to justice.

lems to resolve at present and in the future and we have to forget the past."

Earlier, the two men met Hun Sen, the Prime Minister, at his residence outside the capital. They were warmly greeted and treated to lunch. They had travelled by helicopter along with Ieng Sary, the former Khmer Rouge Foreign Minister, who led the first large wave of defections from the guerrilla movement in 1996 and was granted a royal pardon.

On Monday, Mr Hun Sen gave the clearest indication that it was unlikely that the pair would have to face trial for crimes against humanity. He said such a trial might mean a return to civil war.

However, there is a growing mood of dismay among Cambodians that the Khmer Rouge leaders are unlikely to be held accountable for their role in Cambodia's killing fields. Many accepted the Government's so-called "win-win" pol-



Khieu Samphan, left, and Nuon Chea yesterday make their first public apology for the Khmer Rouge ings

icy which allowed former Khmer Rouge soldiers to be re-integrated into society without retribution. However, moves to allow the movement's leaders back appear to be a step too far for many. "The people

might get angry if Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea are not brought to justice," said a shopkeeper in Phnom Penh. "They are demanding that the Government bring them before a court."

Younk Chhang, director of the independent Documentation Centre of Cambodia, which has been collecting evidence related to the Khmer Rouge period, also dismissed the idea that the past could be

buried. "The Cambodian people cannot accept that," he said. "The defectors Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea gives more strength to Ieng Sary. It provides a real threat to Cambodian society."

## Rivals ready to challenge Netanyahu

FROM ROSS DUNN IN JERUSALEM

TWO top Israeli Cabinet ministers signalled yesterday that they might desert Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, as a parliamentary committee set May 17 for the country's next elections.

The date is potent with symbolism, marking the day that the Likud party first came to power in 1977 under Menachem Begin, ending 29 years of Labour rule.

But Mr Netanyahu's hold, over Likud appeared under threat after Ariel Sharon, the Foreign Minister, made a quick turnaround, announcing that he would consider contesting the post of Prime Minister.

Only 24 hours before, Mr Sharon, considered a loyal ally of Mr Netanyahu, had said that he did not want the job, and said his party leader was the best candidate. Mr Sharon later told an Israeli television programme that he would stand if conditions changed.

To add to Mr Netanyahu's woes, Yitzhak Mordechai — the Defence Minister who tops the polls as Israel's most popular minister — criticised the Prime Minister's handling of peace negotiations with the Palestinians. He also indicated he was weighing up whether to leave Likud. "For today, I am a Likud man. If I reach a different conclusion, I'll let the public know."

Mr Mordechai blamed Mr Netanyahu for suspending the Wye River peace deal and said both sides should maintain contacts.

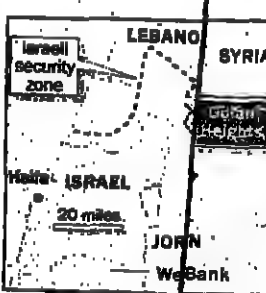
Political analysts have speculated that Mr Mordechai could join Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, a former army chief-of-staff, who is preparing to enter the fray at the head of a new centrist party. Mr Mordechai added to speculation when he said he had sent a bouquet to Mr Lipkin-Shahak on his announcement last week that he was retiring from the army for a political career.

The Defence Minister also displayed his disillusionment with Mr Netanyahu when he said that he welcomed challenges by Dan Meridor, the former Finance Minister, and Benny Begin, the son of Menachem, who have both left Likud to form parties. Mr

Netanyahu's political enemies also include Davi Levy, a former Foreign Minister and one-time coalition partner, who yesterday hinted that he might co-operate in Ehud Barak, the opposition Labour Party leader.

The Prime Minister also being challenged by Likud's leadership by Uri Medani, a backbencher, yesterday began wooing observant Jews, who helped him to gain power in 1996. While not known for any deep religious beliefs, he visited the Western Wall, the Old City of Jerusalem, a holiest site in Judaism.

The poll date — which could have been set as early as March — has been criticised by Palestinian leaders, who say the peace process should not be a hostage of Israeli politics. Some Israeli leaders, including President Ezer Weizman, are also concerned, saying the country cannot afford six months' political stalemate. But the Knesset is expected to confirm the date on Monday.



## Golan assets 'were ceded'

Jerusalem: A former Israeli Finance Minister yesterday confirmed a secret compensation plan was spared for the evacuation of Jewish settlers from the Golan Heights if the territory is returned to Syria (Ross Dunn writes). "Some work was done to evaluate the worth of the assets on the Golan Heights," said Abraham Shohat, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, has vowed to hand back the Golan which was seized during the 1967 war.

## Yacht survivor vows not to enter again

FROM ROGER MAYNARD IN SYDNEY

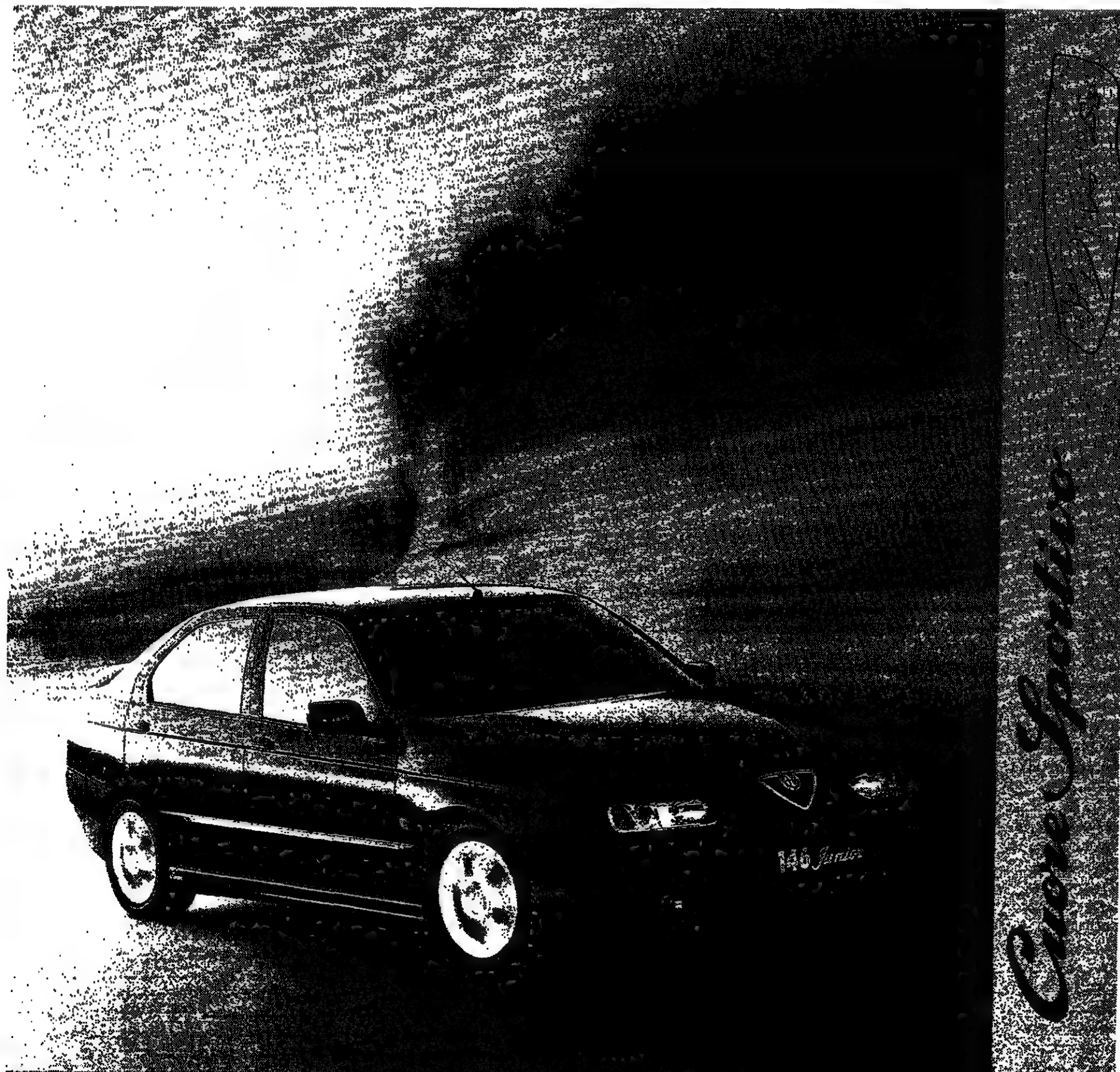
THE search for survivors in the Sydney-Hobart yacht disaster was suspended last night, as the death toll rose to six. Rescue helicopters picked up two bodies, believed to be crewmen from the stricken *Winston Churchill*, the veteran cutter which sank on Sunday after being pounded by mountainous seas.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority admitted there was little hope of finding a third member of the crew. Rescue authorities have also given up hope for Glyn Charles, the British Olympic yachtsman washed overboard from *Sword of Orion*. Two men from *Business Post Nai-*

Richard Wring, the *Winston Churchill* skipper, said he was devastated to lose so many close friends and vowed never to enter race again.

Two injured crew members from *Solo Gie Challenger*, which had been missing, were winched on board the Australian naval frigate *HMAS Newcastle* yesterday. In Hobart, race organisers cancelled the trophy presentation and festivities as a mark of respect for those who lost their lives at sea.

The crew of the US maxi-yacht *Sagwa* arrived in Tasmania after finishing the race in two days, 16 hours, three minutes and 22 seconds, five



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# Defiant Iraq ignores 'sick no-fly zones'

IRAQ, determined to remain in the international spotlight, claimed last night that its warplanes had defied no-fly zones imposed by British and American aircraft, which it again vowed to shoot down. State-run newspapers also gave a warning to Arab leaders that they ignored popular support for Iraq at their peril.

The so-called air exclusion zones, established in the sick imagination of the British and American administrations, said Taha Yassin Ramadan, the Iraqi Vice-President, "Iraqi planes, in fact, are still flying in a normal manner in Iraqi airspace," he added. "Our resistance will continue against an aggression. The war is still on."

There was no confirmation from Washington or London that Iraqi jets had attempted to probe the air exclusion zones, established after the Gulf War to protect the Kurdish and Shia communities from government forces. Iraq, convinced that it has the political advantage after Operation Desert Fox, seems determined to keep tensions high and capitalise on divisions in the international community.

On Monday, American warplanes struck an anti-aircraft battery in northern Iraq, killing for Iraqi soldiers, after three surface-to-air missiles were fired at them. Wash-

'Shot-down jet'

row rumbles on,

writes Michael

Theodonoulou

in Nicosia

ington said that all its F16s had returned safely to their bases at Incirlik in southern Turkey, although Baghdad continued to claim yesterday that its gunners had shot down a US warplane. It was unable to produce wreckage or a downed pilot.

David Leavy, a National Security Council spokesman, said yesterday that America's determination to enforce the no-fly zones remained strong. "Our pilots will obviously take appropriate action... the no-fly zone prevents Saddam from using his own aircraft to oppress his people and threaten his neighbours. This remains a key element of our containment policy and we will aggressively enforce it," he added.

Claiming that Iraqi aircraft are playing cat-and-mouse in the no-fly zones are unlikely to cause alarm. Few Iraqi aircraft attempted to engage allied planes during the Gulf War, when Baghdad dis-

patched the cream of its fighter jets to neighbouring Iran for safety.

Tehran has claimed them as compensation for its war with Iraq and refused to return them. The remaining Iraqi fleet has been hit by a shortage of spare parts because of sanctions and the no-fly zones, which cover more than half of Iraq's territory, have limited the ability of pilots to train.

Tirades against regional leaders in the Baghdad press reflects a growing frustration that pro-Iraqi sentiment in the Arab world has not translated into official support for the lifting of sanctions.

At Qadisiya, echoing the apocalyptic rhetoric of the Gulf War, has issued a warning to Arab leaders that "the snowballing Arab wrath will shake the ground from under their feet".

Baghdad was particularly stung by President Mubarak of Egypt's clarification on Sunday that his country's opposition to American airstrikes should not be translated into support for the Iraqi Government, which was at "the root of all the problems".

That rebuke was answered by Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, in yesterday's al-Jumhuriya newspaper. "In reality there is no noble, fair and intelligent person in Egypt, in the Arab homeland or the whole world sharing Mr Mubarak in his deduction," he said.

Washington: The United States released video tape yesterday of its clash with Iraqi forces over the country's northern no-fly zone as bad weather halted patrols there.

A US Defence and Administration spokesman insisted that the flights would resume as soon as possible and said that, despite Iraq's opposition, America was determined to enforce both zones. Flights continued as usual in the south, they said.

The Pentagon released video tape showing the exchange of fire between Iraqi forces and US fighter jets in the most hostile clash since Operation Desert Fox ended nine days ago.

"Splash, splash," said one voice after plumes of smoke could be seen billowing from what the Pentagon said was an Iraqi target.

"Nice shot," said another voice. Before leaving the area, a voice can be heard saying: "Six bombs hit the target area." (Reuters)



Dirk Stutzki, a Hamburg zookeeper, gets the measure of Amje, a walrus, during an annual inventory that involves weighing all 2,488 animals

## Meaning of life dogs Clinton

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

SPECULATION is rife over which seminars the impeached Bill Clinton will attend when he makes his new year pilgrimage today to the bonding experience known as Renaissance Weekend.

Will he visit "Something that's been bugging me lately"? Or how about "My family's lessons for life"? Surely, in the wake of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, he could offer some meaningful thoughts for the half-day session on "Character: What is it? Does it count? Has its meaning changed? How do we teach it?"

He should feel fortunate, perhaps, that last year's seminar entitled "What my spouse is wrong about" is not being repeated.

"There is no panel on impeachment as such," said Doug Heyl, Renaissance spokesman, but he admits that the subject is bound to come up. Indeed, some think that President Clinton's troubles could affect the positive aura of previous years.

"I think it'll be really uncomfortable with the President in an impeachment situation," said Stan Smith, the former Wimbledon champion and a Renaissance veteran.

If anything, the Clinton

scandal could make the off-the-record sessions more interesting, according to Jonathan Alter, a senior editor at Newsweek, who said: "We're looking forward to a chance to talk about it."

Faced with a daunting agenda of 365 seminars, Mr Clinton is expected to drop in on only a few. With mild weather forecast, he is likely to devote more time to the superb golf links of Hilton Head, South Carolina. Last year, when he took a walk on the beach with Buddy, then still a puppy, the chocolate labrador got into a spat with a bigger dog. Presidential apologies were extended to its owner.

Hilary Clinton is always a keen Renaissance participant, but Chelsea, who has been attending these affairs since she was a little girl, has decided to skip it after spending a family Christmas in the White House.

By staying away, she will miss the chance to meet 1,300 invitees, including six Nobel prize winners, 11 college presidents, three astronauts, a Supreme Court justice, Peter Arnett of CNN, Peter Benchley, the author of *Jaws*, and Ruth Westheimer, the sex therapist.

These and other mostly liberal leaders from diverse



Buddies: Clinton and wayward companion

fields are brought together for the sole objective of personal and national renewal, according to retreat organisers.

The weekends were founded by Philip Lader, now the US Ambassador to Britain, and his wife, Linda LeSourd

Lader, who believe that America's future will depend in part on how "we learn from and help each other". The Renaissance idea, they say, is a small contribution to that process.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, a grimmer proceeding was under way. A dozen Republicans — instantly dubbed the 12 angry men — met to organise the prosecution team for Mr Clinton's impeachment trial, due to enter its preliminary phase next week in the Senate.

The dozen are members of the House Judiciary Committee, which passed two articles of impeachment accusing Mr Clinton of perjury and obstruction of justice over the Lewinsky affair. All lawyers, they are on a voyage of uncertainty with little navigational precedent to help them.

One unresolved issue is whether to call Ms Lewinsky and others as witnesses. Some say their testimony would prolong the trial needlessly, given that all the evidence is in the report by Kenneth Starr, the independent prosecutor. Others insist that witnesses are needed to dramatise and reinforce the case.

Henry Hyde, the committee chairman, will formally present the articles of impeachment next week. After that, no one is sure what will happen.

## Guevara's comrades honoured

Santa Clara, Cuba: Thousands of Cubans paid their last respects yesterday to "Tania the Guerrilla", the only woman to fight with the left-wing rebel Ernesto "Che" Guevara on his last, fateful revolutionary mission in 1967.

The remains of "Tania", whose real name was Haydee Tamara Bunka Bider, were flown in an urn from Havana early yesterday to the central city of Santa Clara.

Along with the remains of nine other killed rebels, including Cubans and Bolivians, they were displayed to the public, decked in national flags, in a civic building.

Crowds lined the streets and filed past the remains. "Tania's" bones were uncovered in September in the remote corner of Bolivia where Guevara's band was hunted down and killed by soldiers during an abortive attempt to export Cuban-style revolution to South America.

The remains of the guerrillas are to be buried today with full state honours at a mausoleum in Santa Clara which already holds the remains of Guevara and some of the other members of his band in Bolivia. (Reuters)



An Iraqi anti-aircraft crew on watch in Baghdad yesterday after Iraq claimed it had downed a plane

## Mall crusaders tell America to drop shopping

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN NEW YORK

A MONTH ago Han Shan visited the world's biggest mall on its busiest day of the year. His experience turned into one of the more uplifting surprises in this history of shopping.

Carrying a bulky rucksack, Shan slipped into the Mall of America in Minneapolis — a retail colossus with 500 shops and 6,000 parking spaces. It was opening time on the day after Thanksgiving, when the Christmas season is traditionally launched with a national orgy of unbridled spending.

Taking care not to attract the attention of the mall's private security force, he climbed 90ft up a steel column into the atrium's roof girders and unfurled a giant banner showing planet Earth falling through the broken bottom of a shopping bag. Then he absconded with a shopping bag. Then he absconded with a shopping bag.

This is a nation hopelessly addicted, and aware of it. As pre-Christmas sales roll into

post-Christmas sales, American consumer debt is expected to surge past \$4,000 (£2,380) in high-interest credit card bills for every man, woman and child in the country.

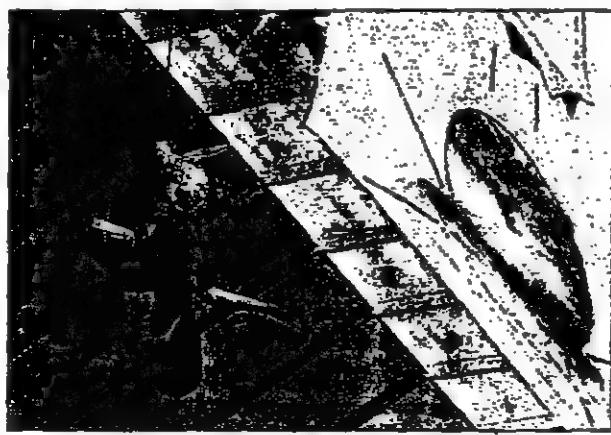
This time last year, barely one in four of them said that they were enjoying Christmas. Nine in ten felt they had overspent. For those who seek it, there is help. Like dissidents in China, a network of anti-shopping guerrillas has sprung up across the country, picketing malls and distributing anti-consumerist Christmas carol sheets in a valiant attempt to slow the juggernaut of what a recent public television series called "the most extravagant lifestyle the world has ever seen". Since 1950, Americans have consumed more resources than all of humanity before them.

An estimated 2,000 "voluntary simplicity" groups have started recruiting on street corners and the Internet. Their call to buy less and throw

away less has been heeded by a few idealistic yuppies, but mainly by hard-pressed parents, half of whom plunged into debt last year to keep up with the Joneses.

This year it has been harder than ever to satisfy the kids through sheer largesse: five of the 15 best-selling toys in America cost more than \$100 each, and an astonishing 96 per cent of children in one survey included a big-screen television on their Christmas wish-list. Mr Shan's Minneapolis climb was meant to shock, but also to publicise International No Shopping Day, the brainchild of a former New York advertising executive who says that the idea is to undergo a jolt of abstinence and then "let the spirit of frugality wash over the rest of the Christmas season".

More than a million people worldwide managed to buy nothing for 24 hours. Katie Larn claimed, even if not all of them took part in ritual "credit



An anti-shopping activist absconds down the Mall of America shopping centre in Bloomington, Minnesota

card cut-ups" which he also organised for shopaholics. However, retail America was unimpressed.

Alan Muller marked the day by dressing up as Father Christmas and heading for the tax-free Christiansa Mall in Delaware. He sported the full Santa Claus regalia and had a retinue of elves but instead of

handing out gifts, he had a stack of flyers suggesting free alternatives such as homemade pies and promises to take out Grandma's rubbish. Within five minutes he had been hauled before the mall's executive director by security. "I got the idea there was something evil about a Santa Claus not encouraging shopping,"

he reflected. Not necessarily. This being America, an enterprising few have made fortunes from the simplicity fad. Sarah Ban Breathnach became rich by selling 3.2 million copies of a book of house-keeping platitudes called *Simple Abundance*. Many readers, meanwhile, prospered thanks to the surging stock market. The result is a sequel — *Something More*.

True advocates of spending less are realistic about their chances of winning America off its retail religion. "In my darker moments I think it'll take a catastrophe," Mr Larn said, while Betsy Taylor, of the Washington-based Centre for a New American Dream, sighed: "The chances of us actually making a difference are utterly remote."

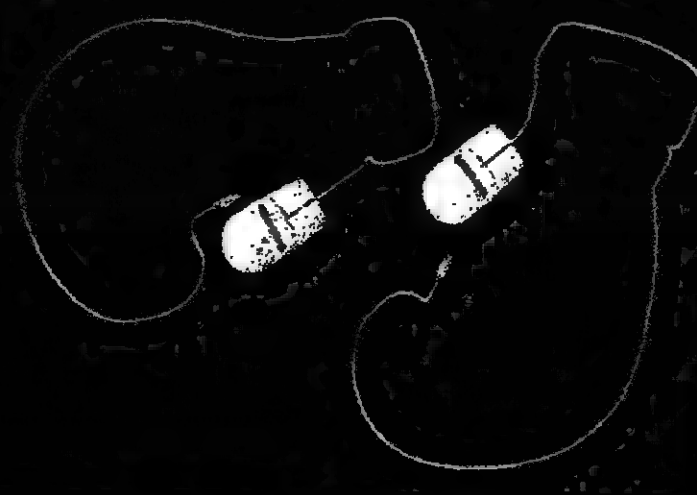
But they soldier on, convinced that they have a duty to articulate an inchworm but widespread yearning for simpler times. They may have a point. Scholars say that real aggregate happiness peaked in America in 1957.

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# Will robots take over the world?

This century has seen remarkable scientific breakthroughs, but there is more to come. Anjana Ahuja reports on what is in store for the next 100 years

As the 20th century draws to a close, does science stand at the beginning of an epic period or at the end? As Sir John Maddox writes in *What Remains to be Discovered* (Macmillan, £20): "This century has been so rich in discovery and so packed with technical innovation that it is tempting to believe that there can never be another like it."

But Sir John, a former Editor of *Nature*, believes that this is far from the truth. Yet last week's *Mind and Matter* (The Times, December 23), which documented what eminent scientists rated as the most important achievements of the century, showed that research over the past 100 years has roamed across an extraordinary variety of frontiers. Space exploration; the computer revolution; widespread vaccination; the first heart-transplant operation; air travel; test-tube babies; the atomic bomb; genetically engineered foods available in supermarkets. Unravelling the structure of DNA in 1953 ranked in last week's survey as the single most impressive scientific feat of the century.

Some sceptics argue that the 21st century will not deliver similarly profound advances because the golden age of discovery is over. Their view, summarised so provocatively in John Horgan's *The End of Science* (Abacus, £8.99), is that the fundamentals of science have been cracked. The Big Bang theory tells us how the Universe started; we now understand DNA, the code of life; technologists are close to creating a robot that is as intelligent as any human being.

Others argue that this is an intellectually impoverished view of where science is at. The astounding achievements of the past century, they say, do not spell the end of science. Rather, they will do one of two things — pave the way for future glories or crumble in the face of further evidence, giving rise to completely new theories.

One example of the former is space exploration — without the Moon landings, we wouldn't have the International Space Station, on which construction began this year. On the other hand, Sir John predicts that the Big Bang theory

of how the Universe began — already so well-established that it is enshrined in schoolbooks — will undergo a radical overhaul. He points out that some holes in the theory stubbornly refuse to disappear. For example, there is less mass in the Universe than predicted. While some have confidently expected that the "missing mass" would be located, it has yet to be found. Could the next few years throw up a completely new theory of how the Universe started?

Robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) are two related fields which promise much, according to Michio Kaku, physics professor and author of *Visions* (OUP, £18.99). One of the best-known efforts is the Cog Project at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Cog is supposed to be the ultimate in AI — a humanoid robot that can act, talk and even look like a person.

Hans Moravec, an AI pioneer at Carnegie-Mellon University, believes that by 2030 robots will be able to visualise tasks and assess the consequences of their actions. By 2040 robots should be able to reason at least as efficiently as people. Moravec even envisages a world where robots will display "superhuman reasoning". By 2050, emotions will be commonplace because they will help machines to bond with their human masters.

But this raises an intriguing question: will robots be so similar to us that they, too, will start wondering where they came from? As well as showing awareness of the world, will they be aware of themselves? In other words, will they be conscious? By the middle of the next century, we may even begin to wonder whether such advanced robots, with their enormous mental capacities and physical strength, pose a threat.

The cyborg — the fusion of man and machine — is another plausible prospect in our lifetime. Doctors have already devised silicon chips that can replace damaged retinas and therefore restore sight in some laboratories, paralysed individuals can control computers by twitches of an eyelid or through the power of thought alone (using the tiny electrical impulses in the brain). One barrier to controlling the human body us-

ing silicon chips is that the complete electrical wiring diagram for the brain has never been drawn. Yet some scientists estimate that by 2010 it will be feasible to chop a brain into a million slices to determine how each cell is connected. It would be a feat comparable to the Human Genome Project, a \$3 billion study, aimed at listing the 100,000 or so genes in the body.

This project has given rise to some astonishing predictions of how biology will advance. Francis Collins and Walter Gilbert, who run the Human Genome Project at the National Institute of Health near Washington, expect that by 2010 we will have genetic profiles of as many as 5,000 hereditary diseases. By 2030 we will have access to our DNA codes, perhaps on a compact disc. Biologists predict that this will revolutionise medicine. Visiting a doctor in 2030 will entail a scan of your DNA code for signs of disease, then recommendations for preventive therapy, some of it gene-based.

Controversial issues such as designer babies and cloning will come to the fore repeatedly as the science progresses because history shows that parents will take advantage of any technology capable of giving their offspring a better chance in life. For example, parents will pay a fortune for human growth hormone treatment privately, even if their youngsters do not qualify medically, because being tall is thought to confer an advantage. However, since decisions on such matters could have far-reaching implications, progress in the laboratory is bound to be accompanied by vigorous ethical debate.

Next century, scientists will begin thinking seriously about how to power the planet, given that fossil fuels are expected to last only a few more decades. Physicists have turned to fusion — extracting energy from seawater by fusing hydrogen nuclei together. The problem is that to overcome the natural repulsion between two positively charged atomic nuclei, they must be slammed together at between 10 million and 100 million degrees. Creating such temperatures takes energy and multibillion-dollar projects in America, Japan and Germany have failed to produce more energy than they consume. Yet plasma scientists still expect the technique to light up the planet one day. By 2010 the principle should have been demonstrated; by 2050 fusion could be a common energy source.

Harnessing energy from the Sun is another prospect. By 2025 some scientists predict that half the world's electricity will come from the Sun. These areas of research are as exciting and profound as any that have taxed scientists this century. As Sir John sums up: "Who, now, dares to say that the days of surprise are over?"



Interface: Divining the future

Electric blues: robots will be designed to have "feelings" but some sceptics fear they may be a threat



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## Einstein's biggest blunder

THE fact that the Universe is expanding has been known for more than 70 years. But 1998 added a bewildering twist. According to two independent teams of astronomers, the rate of expansion is accelerating. It looks as if some mysterious anti-gravitational force is pushing the Universe apart, an idea Albert Einstein suspected, and then rejected.

The finding, announced to some scepticism, has been named *Science's* breakthrough of the year, and also features as one of 1998's highlights on Physics Web, the Internet site (<http://physicsweb.org>) run by the Institute of Physics. It is a genuinely shocking result, which makes its rapid acceptance the more remarkable.

"My own reaction is somewhere between amazement and horror," says Brian Schmidt, an Australian astronomer and member of the High-*z* Supernova Research Team, when in February he announced results confirm-

ing those reported a month earlier by the Supernova Cosmology Project, based at Cambridge, England, and Berkeley, California.

Both teams reached their conclusions by measuring the brightness of distant supernova explosions. These huge events, caused by the explosions of stars too large to be stable, provide astronomers with a useful tool.

Mathematics tells us the precise point at which a star expands too much and explodes. In the case of Type Ia supernovae, this happens when the star is one of a pair and gradually acquires material from its companion. Whenever the star may be in the Universe, the moment it tips over the limit, the explosion will be the same. This



SCIENCE BRIEFING

Nigel Hawkes

means that Type Ia supernovae act as "standard candles", illuminating the sky with a brilliance as fixed as an orthodoxist's smile.

The brightness we see, however, depends also on how far away the supernova is. That can also be measured by the red shift of the galaxy in which the supernova is found — the degree to which its light is shifted to the red end of the spectrum, which in turn is linked to its distance from us.

The two teams have studied distant Type Ia supernovae, which are rare: in a typical galaxy they occur only two or three times every thousand years. The Cambridge-Berkeley team has been at it for more than a decade, and has analysed 42 such explosions. Their brightness and red

shift provide independent tests of how far away they are. If the Universe has been expanding smoothly, these two measurements should agree. But they do not.

Both teams conclude that the distant supernovae are about 10 to 15 per cent further away than they should be, even on the most generous of assumptions. Professor Richard Ellis, of Cambridge University, says: "Amazingly, both teams agree that the Universe is accelerating."

Explaining why is tricky. When Einstein wrote the equations of general relativity in 1917, he assumed that the Universe was static and coined a term, the cosmological constant, to account for a force that would stop it collapsing under gravity and make his equations fit. A dozen years later, Edwin Hubble found that the Universe was expanding, and Einstein realised his constant was no longer needed. He called it "the biggest blunder of my life". Maybe he was right all along.

## Quitting it a stroke

A STUDY of middle-aged smokers shows that they need a real shock to get them to give up. A heart attack will almost certainly do it, but only if the smoker is educated to at least degree-level, scientists have found.

Dr Linda Wray and colleagues of the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan studied 2,391 smokers aged 51 to 61 who were familiar with anti-smoking messages but chose to ignore them. In the *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* the researchers say that even a heart attack could not always persuade hardened smokers to give up.

Without a heart attack, virtually none gave up between 1992 and 1994, regardless of education. In general, the higher the level of education, the less likely anybody is to smoke, but by 1992, those who were going to give up had presumably done so.

Among those who had suffered a heart attack, educational level accurately predicted what happened next. Only those with at least a high-school education changed their behaviour, and each additional year of education greatly increased the likelihood of quitting. A postgraduate degree a heart attack almost guarantee a smoker will quit. Now we know what PhDs are for.

SANDPIPERS can locate shellfish under wet sand by dipping their beaks a mere quarter-inch into it for a few seconds, which is a considerable skill.

Just how they accomplish this has been discovered by a Dutch team from The Netherlands Institute for Sea Research and the Universities of Groningen and Leiden.

Their experiments showed that knots — short-billed, Arctic-breeding sand-

## Radar homes in on shellfish diet

pipers — can just as easily detect small pebbles as shellfish. These pebbles have no smell, are the same temperature as the sand and emit no signals of any sort, so the team conclude that the birds detect them by their effect on the flow of water through the sand.

It works like this. When the knot push-

es its beak into the sand, it creates a pressure wave in the water lying in the interstices between the grains. This wave is reflected back, and detected by cells in the horny layer at the end of the beak. Any objects larger than a grain of sand show up like aircraft on a radar screen.

This works only in wet sand, explaining why the birds always follow the tide as it ebbs. It also explains why they feed only in areas free from stones, and how they survive at all on inter-tidal flats where shellfish are rare.

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# Confessions of a junkie junkie

Bronwen Maddox admits to a passion for antique Americana

I crept up on me, like any mild addiction. But I now have a visceral leap of guilty excitement if I see a brightly coloured flag hanging out of a dusty shop, even before I make out the word "Antiques".

In my third year of living in Washington, I find I have been sucked into a quiet cult with disciples across America. In its secret language, the object of desire is called junkie, or junkies. Its devotees are known to spend whole weekends "antiquing".

It started, I insist, out of necessity, as I arrived in Washington with no furniture. At first I rented some and, in a careless moment, wrote about it. Despite the success of the experiment — the sheer ease of ordering furniture and sending it away again — I found myself dogged by that hastily dashed-off piece, a plight many journalists will recognise. It became clear that whatever I wrote about Naito or Bosnia or, indeed, Monica, there would be someone asking kindly "how is your rented furniture?"

It had to go, if only to lay the ghost of that article, but its exit left me again with a bare house. Yet there is a problem with buying furniture — or, indeed, anything — in Washington. You think you are arriving at the capital of the world's foremost capitalist economy. In fact you are landed in a fortress of local

I have been sucked into a quiet cult with many disciples

near-monopolies, which might as well be centrally planned for all their shelves have to offer. Furniture is expensive, takes five months to deliver and then may not be quite what you thought you were getting.

There was also the influence of my mother's family in small-town Massachusetts. My mother and I had spent an absorbing week a few summers ago clearing out a relative's house after he died. It was a memorable trawl through the objects of 1950s America, with agents from the Cape Cod antique shops wandering covetously around the house, saying "you could get \$50 for that red rocking chair, you know".

The lesson stayed: American "antiques" are fun, pretty, occasionally beautiful, and cheap. I began to dip into the local shops on weekend forays from DC into the Blue Ridge Mountains, the rolling Maryland farm country and the fishing villages of Chesapeake Bay. As the city's residents understandably emphasise, one of the luxuries of Washington is that it's so easy to get out.

I started, by virtue of a bare kitchen, buying old glass bowls and glasses. Beautiful, ridged bowls and water pitchers were \$5 each; what is quaintly called "Elegant Depression" glass. Strong, graceful patterns from the 1950s cost only slightly more.

There are, of course, real antiques among the clutter — tables and beds from the 1870s, in woods not often seen in Britain: pale gold maple

and lots of dark red cherry. And there are true bargains, particularly old, ornately painted chairs with wicker seats; they are several inches too narrow for the modern American taste but, provided your friends are slim, they're fine. And there are everyone's favourite toys from the past — jukeboxes and tin trucks. But most of the objects are not what you would call old or valuable. "Seventeen years" said one proprietor firmly, when I asked the criterion for his goods.

The spring from which the antique trade flows, in fact, is 1950s America. I realised that I was seeing my relative's kitchen again and again, right across the country. I fell into the habit of stepping into the shops to kill 20 minutes before an interview; they are also a reliable source of air-conditioning, cutting through the summer heat of the Deep South. Everywhere, exactly the same household objects, drawn from an age when every home in America had the same stuff.

The care — in fact, fanaticism — with which they are displayed is part of the claustrophobic appeal. There is a particular kind of flour-sifter which used to be popular, back in the days when suburban mothers baked cakes from scratch. It has a metal cylinder in the bottom, and a handle on the side turning a wire wheel to push the flour through. One warehouse I wandered into, in Frederick, Maryland, had perhaps 400 of them lined up neatly on shelves, for 20 cents each.

The shops tend to have a wholesome smell of grain and leather, partly because of the inextricable rows of footballs and suitcases at the entrance. But there is something overpoweringly pathetic about them. Not least, they tend to crop up in battered little towns bearing the names of bloody Civil War battlefields, which now have no other commerce than the junk trade.

After only a month or so, I found my new preoccupation embarrassing. If visitors squealed over the booty — where on earth did you get this? — I mumbled a reply, aware that the effort could never be justified. A male house guest with excessive developed over-agility complained suspiciously: "You've wiped the history directory of your Internet file." I would rather have confessed to the implied accusation — that I'd been trawling through some murky trough of pornography — than have left the images of Virginia antique stores on the hard drive.

I reached saturation quickly, not from lack of space but from lack of desire to build a museum to the 1950s. The junkies are blended in with the rest of the house, undetectable, I hope, to visitors. Probably I'll have them for ever, although, as with rented furniture, there is the certain knowledge that you can send it back whence it came.



## Our moral wasteland

In a Britain ruled by evasion and cynicism, few dare to speak of right and wrong, says David Selbourne

It is often argued that there is "no new thing under the sun", as Ecclesiastes puts it. But where anything like the observation in *The Guardian* by a spokesman for Castle Morpeth council that residents of private care homes are "income-producing raw material" and the dead represent "the waste produced by the business"?

Is it a new moral thing, or an old, that a lesbian couple practising self-insemination should, before breaking up their partnership, have had two DIY babbles using a pickle jar and syringe? Or that another similar couple should purchase the frozen sperm of a stranger via the Internet?

And when, until now, would a distinguished surgeon, describing "the prospect of taking a dead person's face and draping it over the skull of a living man or woman", declare, as *The Times* reported, that "it is simply like changing the cloth of an armchair"?

Is it an old moral thing, or a new moral thing, that there is now an arson attack in at least three schools every day? Or that one in three churches can expect to be the target of an attack of some kind — theft, vandalism, arson — each year? Or that malicious vandalism is now the biggest cause of railway accidents? Or that 86 per cent of alarm calls in the Metropolitan Police area are shown to be false? Or that trees and shrubs planted in memory of the Dunblane victims were stolen within days from the local cemetery?

Has there ever before been such violence directed in a time of peace? The cynicism and amorality with which some address our moral and social confusions are a further cause of our ills.

"The moral issue is dead," declares Hugo Young in *The Guardian*. "The family has had it," says Sara Maitland, again in *The Guardian*, seeming to gloat over its "terminal sickness". "When politicians talk about strengthening the family, liberals reach for their revolvers," says Polly Toynbee, also in *The Guardian*. "Families are by their nature Darwinian units," argues Simon Jenkins, delectably, in *The Times*.

And marriage? The cynic and the amoralist are hard at work on it, once more with women to the fore. Here is Tania Kendersley in *The Times*: "Nobody seems able to tell me why we're still doing it... Surely we have

these merry, piping times of peace, a Prime Minister (Blair) who stands for nothing is the best leader to have... for that is the way the times must move and 'Isms' would stop it."

You would be as wrong to look for irony in this last sentiment, as for principle. It is a nadir of its kind. It emanates from a moral wasteland made bleaker by the evasion of moral responsibility and engagement.

There are many types of such evasion, but 11 arguments recur when a moral problem confronts us. There is the notion that "there is nothing you can do about it; or not much"; the idea that "it has never been any different"; the proposition that "there is no quick fix" for a given ethical dilemma; the excuse that "this is the price of a free society"; the call that "everything is changing and you must move with the tide"; the cliché that "it is no use turning the clock back"; the insistence that a problem is "much more complex" than you think; the alibi that a problem is "beyond the reach of law"; the sneer that "you are focusing on the wrong issue"; the defence that "people in glass houses shouldn't..." and the basic evasion that, since "everyone does it", how can you object?

The cumulative effect of these evasions is often to paralyse debate itself. And when all other argument fails, the objector is dismissed as a "moral crusader"; a "moral authoritarian"; a "puritan" or — the old standby — "right-wing". One ends with a situation in which even a church leader, the Bishop of Edinburgh, can pronounce "moralising" to be "one of the least attractive of human characteristics".

Evasion and falsehood are widely employed to give the slip to the ideas that common moral rules can and should exist. There has not been, since the French Revolution, a greater concern for, and insistence upon, the promotion and expansion of individual rights in an already deeply free society. Yet this culture of rights coexists with a cynicism about the distinctions between right and wrong. There seems to be no doubt about the former and every doubt, assiduously promoted, about the latter. It is a drastic combination.

This is an edited extract from *Moral Evasion*, published today by the Centre for Policy Studies.

comment@the-times.co.uk

The temptation to retreat into denial and disbelief is strong

with all these commentators is that an important ethical issue generally lies latent within their arguments. And that, seemingly in consequence, a destructive urge is aroused to deconstruct a moral truth or civic principle.

"The first thing you notice, as you plead to get out of jury service," noted Catherine Bennett in *The Guardian*, "is how many others are doing the same thing." This is to dump ordure on a civic duty.

There is no shame shown in this denial or amoral rubbishing of belief and value. Its reach is now far and wide, even getting at the very core and crux of the idea of principle itself. Consider John Lloyd in *The Times*: "If one does not stand for policies in the old sense... then you are free and can set others free... in

and be looking for a deputy." A chance for Ron Davies, Morgan's friend, to make a comeback?

• THE wife of the Bishop of London tells me about her relationship with her husband's chauffeur. "Fred and I spend quite a lot of time moving furniture together," says Caroline Chartres. "Sometimes this involves crawling around on hands and knees, trying to dismantle larger items. Fred threatens that his autobiography will be entitled *Under the Table with the Bishop's Wife*."

Grounded by a cabal of lefties protesting about his lack of respect for Fidel Castro, the millionaire playboy feared the worst. But when the crunch came, Oppenheim's application sailed through. As he departed, the chairman belittled after him: "I hope the former Tory minister will report on the fairness and reasonableness of the new Labour regime."

• THIS splendid picture of Michael Heseltine attempting to recapture the young-man-about-town image of his undergraduate days at Oxford has landed on the drawbridge of *Diary Towers*. The former Deputy Prime Minister took to the turntables after opening the Purple Turtle, a fashionable new dancehall run by the Oxford Union. Heseltine was invited because, as Union president in 1954, he opened Oxford's first nightclub. Remembering that year, Heaz played Nat King Cole's *Smile*, a track which appears to have failed to impress the audience. Miserable lot.

But for those of you who have just received 17 different flags of either ashtray or perfume (or, I suppose, in some cases both), I have a literary tip. All I can suggest is that you write to the donors saying how staggered you are at their having hit on the only fragrance you ever use, and — to ensure the very happy 1999 I wish you — remember to spend the entire year standing downwind of all of them.

JASPER GERARD

Alan Coren



Just what I always wanted. No, honestly...

My heart goes out to you today, old chums, it really does. I know what it's like. I empathise utterly. For today is that unique day when you will all be compelled to do what I am compelled to do every day. Today, you are all hacks.

Throughout the hung-over quinquennial, you are all stung crouch-backed and desperate at desks and tables, hands trembling over paper, teeth gnawing pens, brains like tumble-dryers — tossing tangled words about in the intercardinal hot air, while beside you the crumpled detritus of defeat scatters around your overflowing waste bins. You are doing this because it is Post-Christmas Day and you are frantically seeking original expressions, apt quotations, unique references, little quips and all the elusive syllables that quality composition requires; you have to do this because you have been paid in advance for your literary efforts with bottles and socks, and ties and cellphones, and umbrellas and mugs, and nightgowns and pipes, and dozens of digital tissues, and this, and now there's nothing for it but to grit the loins and get scribbling for the toxin has struck the hour of deadline.

And where I most feel for you, as we all sit at this selfsame moment struggling to cobble, is that you will be forced to cobble so many files. It is second nature to professional hacks, some might say first nature, but not to you. You are all honest folk, unused, certainly untrained, to being economical with the truth or, more accurately, profligate with the fiction. But that, I'm afraid, is what hackery is all about.

Glance beyond that hummock of unbidden gift-wrapping to the corner where your presents wait in line to be thanked for: oh look, there is a conical flask of some virent cordial from the Urals, it is 120 proof and has a glove of garlic in it, you have already moved its cork for a sip that buckles your knees and sent a crackling blue arc across your flippers, but you must now write about your flabbergasted joy at discovering a whole new taste sensation, ensuring that the grateful words chosen are different from those you will subsequently pen for the giver's wife (they will compare letters), who sent you a pair of tartan slippers three sizes too large and who has to be told she will be thought of whenever you struggle into them. Which is to say, but don't, whenever you fall downstairs.

So those three copies of *A Man In Full*? They are, of course, from three different donors who put an immense amount of thought into the kind of book you like, but not quite enough to conclude that you might therefore have bought it already. You now have four copies of Mr Wode's shimmering deerskin, three of them inscribed. You will thus be required not only to write three letters of equally bogus thanks, but to chuck your own copy away and replace it on your shelves with one of theirs, always remembering either to check it or to switch it when one of them turns up at your house, lest for some reason he pluck it out.

Similarly, you may, from now on, have to weigh your pocket down with four cigarette lighters. In case you happen to run into any of the four generous souls to whom you are about to write with egregious thanks for the Dunhill/Zippo/Ronson — the one lighter you have always dreamt of owning. Feel free to write this letter with either of the fountain pens you have just been given, though extreme care will have to be taken when you thank either of those two donors, because one pen arrived with a blue cartridge in and one with a black, and your benefactors might have tried them out in the shop and would be puzzled when told that theirs was the one you were writing this with, what a wonderful ridd, what a beautiful barrel, I shall never use anything else.

But for those of you who have just received 17 different flags of either ashtray or perfume (or, I suppose, in some cases both), I have a literary tip. All I can suggest is that you write to the donors saying how staggered you are at their having hit on the only fragrance you ever use, and — to ensure the very happy 1999 I wish you — remember to spend the entire year standing downwind of all of them.

## Mass protest

SMART Roman Catholics are in revolt. Bad enough that Brompton Oratory in Knightsbridge, the bastion of traditionalism favoured by the good and the great, is planning to abandon Tridestine Latin during Vespers. But far worse, congregants fear that Father Ignatius Harrison is considering watering down the liturgy to compete with Holy Trinity Brompton. The Evangelical establishment around the corner, which provided Jonathan Aitken (pictured) with spiritual sustenance during his time of need, has been attracting increasing numbers of smart young Catholics to its more laid-back, happy-clappy services.

The Oratory has been popular with the beau monde for years. It has provided comfort to the Blairs. During last summer's Wimbledon, Boris Becker and his wife Barbara baptised their son at the church. Jerry Hall (pictured) joined the celebrations there at the September wedding of Princess Maria-Theresa Lowenstein to Manfredi della Gherardesca, the brother of the Duchess of York's Italian Count. But, despite high-profile support, concern about filling pews has brought forward the idea of dropping Latin and engendered a bout of wrathful letter-writing in the parish pump. "The more up-to-date you are, the sooner you are out of date. Leave Vespers alone!" is the kind of tone taken. I would love to eavesdrop on confessions.



• PETER MANDELSON'S Neighbourhood Watch is fed up with doorstepping journalists pinching the locals' parking spaces. "They leave their engines running all day," one woman moans. "The ones from ITN are the worst."

### Strike a light

THE plan by Christian Churches to provide all 23.5 million households in Britain with a candle for Millennium Eve has turned out to



be unexpectedly pricey. Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists will spend a further £2.35 million because they failed to take into account the danger of revellers engulfing themselves in conflagrations of biblical proportions.

Originally, the Churches had budgeted on 20p per candle-pack. Now they will have to spend an extra 10p per household to cover the cost of using fire-resistant plastic. But the message seems not to have got through to churches in Wiltshire and Dorset: they have published a millennium booklet called *New Start: New Fire*.

• LAUREN BACALL (right) is ganging up with Joan Axtrod, Elizabeth Taylor and Sybil Burton Christopher to build a rose garden in Los Angeles in memory of the late Roddy McDowall. It never fails to amaze me how an actor

whose most famous role involved wearing a rubber ape mask should attract such a glamorous fan club.

### Hit and Ron?

RHODRI MORGAN, I hear, is preparing if necessary to be a bad loser in the election for King of Wales. If the Labour MP cannot defeat Alun Michael, Tony Blair's favourite, in the ballot for leader of the Welsh assembly, he plans to call a vote of no confidence as soon as the parliament gathers.

"If enough leftwingers are elected, Rhodri believes he could win the vote," says a top Taff. "He would then hope to fill the top role



### Bar extension

LINDA BELLOSS old stamping ground must be changing. Philip Oppenheim, the former Conservative Treasury Minister, was worried that he would face a kangaroo court when he applied to Lambeth council to expand his Cuban bar at Waterloo.

Greeted by a cabal of lefties protesting about his lack of respect for Fidel Castro, the millionaire playboy feared the worst. But when the crunch came, Oppenheim's application sailed through. As he departed, the chairman belittled after him: "I hope the former Tory minister will report on the fairness and reasonableness of the new Labour regime."





## KIDNAP IN YEMEN

Yemen may be beautiful, but it is also deadly

The killings yesterday of British tourists held hostage in Yemen come as a tragic shock. Diplomats, travel companies and newspapers alike have portrayed Yemeni kidnappers as the hospitable providers of one of the fringe benefits of Arabian travel. Captives have usually been treated as honoured guests, feasted in every refuge, while their kidnappers have been viewed more as traditional men of business than armed threats to life and liberty. Yesterday's tragedy is an anomaly, yet it may have made Yemen a safer country to visit.

These deaths follow hard on the heels of those of the four engineers killed in Chechnya. Links will inevitably be made. Many will lay responsibility at the door of incompetent security forces. After all, the victims of Abyan and Grozny died during apparent rescue attempts by forces without the training or expertise of our own SAS. Yet ending a siege is always risky, whoever undertakes the task — even the successful end to the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege saw one captive killed. Some might say, therefore, that negotiations must be allowed to run their course. But the moral obligation to act to protect those held against their will, on threat of death, must be maintained. Many will argue that Yemen is now as dangerous as Chechnya. Hostage-taking has been a staple of Yemeni politics for centuries. The last Imam of North Yemen, ousted by a Nasser-inspired coup, governed his fractious country by holding representatives of the principal clans and tribes, who lived (and travelled abroad) as his honoured guests, and had body parts removed when assurances of good conduct were broken. (British administrators in the south were not prepared to mutilate their own hostages in return.) Recent kidnappings have been conducted on similar lines as tribes, feeling excluded from the benefits of development, have seized Western tourists

in order to strengthen their claims for new roads or oil revenues.

But kidnapping has never been a feature of tribal politics in the south. Abyan district is the ultra-loyal home of Vice-President Abd Rabbah Mansour Hadi — a man promoted for the support he brought to the Sanaa Government in the vicious civil war in 1994. A direct challenge to a Government keen to stamp out kidnapping as a bargaining device, in a district commanding the vital trade route to al-Mukalla (the south's second port), could not be countenanced. The tragedy of yesterday's victims is that they were caught in the middle when the consensus rules of Yemeni kidnapping had to change.

As ever in Arabia, there may be more to Sanaa's actions than meet the eye. The Yemeni Government was set up in the wake of the 1990 union of North and South Yemen, to extend Sanaa President Ali Abdullah Saleh's hold over the nominally socialist south. Following the civil war of 1994, which President Saleh won, Islamic Jihad was used to kill off socialist officials who still posed an obstacle to Sanaa's hegemony. But its growing assertiveness led Sanaa to close down its training camps and arrest its leader. Sunday's kidnapping was Islamic Jihad's response.

Britain has always maintained that the only response to kidnappers is to resist their demands. It has been at the forefront of the international community's attempts to convince Sanaa of the same. Outsiders' best protection is a viable State which can guarantee their safety. By turning on his own Islamic Jihad — no matter how clumsily handled the action, or how machiavellian the motives behind it — President Saleh has attempted to send a signal to those who would prey on visitors to the land of frankincense and the Hadramaut. But it has been a costly one.

## THE FIFTIES

Elizabeth David, poet in a *le Creuset* casserole

As Britain endured the blight of postwar rationing, an almond-eyed woman seized her pen in revolt at the greasy horrors of bread and gristle rissoles and corned beef tinned-in-the-hole complacently served up at a Ross-on-Wye hotel. She started to work out an agonised craving for the sun. Even to write words like *apricot*, *olives* and *butter*, *leeks* and *lemons*, oil and *almonds*, produced assuagement. "After a war spent drifting through Provence, Greece and Egypt with a seriously disreputable lover, the rebellious child of the sort of family that never went near a kitchen had finally found her cause."

Elizabeth David's first book, *Mediterranean Food*, was published in 1950, rapidly followed by recipes from the Italian and French countryside — and her mastery of *French Provincial Cooking*. She flavoured the whole decade, restoring hedonism to war-deprived British palates and teaching the newly (and in most cases blessedly) cookless middle classes that garlic had more uses than scaring off vampires. And just as continental travel was again becoming possible, her recipes and the mini-essays and quotations accompanying them evoked the sensuous aromas of wild fennel, dulse and Greek *Skordalia*, of lemon groves and exotic fish markets with their great heaps of shiny fish, silver, vermillion, or tiger-striped, and those long needle fish whose bones so mysteriously turn out to be green.

Her writing is literary art in a saucepan, betraying the influence of friends ranging from Norman Douglas, Lawrence Durrell and Cyril Connolly to Evelyn Waugh, who named her *Italian Food* his 1954 Book of the Year. But they were solidly practical,

too, assuming little or no knowledge. That is not surprising. "ED" had started out in digs as an unassuming actress not even knowing how to make a cup of tea (her room-mate, the actress Joan Hickson, showed her). So she could see that a novice, instructed by the redoubtable Mrs Beeton to skin a rabbit while warm, would be quite likely to shove it in the oven to warm up, with disastrous results. Her recipes were also often hearteningly cheap, found uses for everything from soft roasts to sheep's lungs and, in the early editions, were full of hints about how to get round the lack of the proper ingredients.

She began without great expectations, observing drily that rationing and bad restaurants "have led Englishwomen to take a far greater interest in food than was formerly considered polite". Good food, she maintained, required "a devoted, a determined, spirit, but not, it is to be hoped, one of martyrdom". Some of her best recipes, such as *boeuf flamé à l'Avignonnaise*, take only nine lines and can be made in three minutes. And because they could be read with pleasure by non-cooks, they started to lure men, too, into stirring sauces. One of them was the young Terence Conran.

But the larger ambition is there from the start, the "hope to give some idea of the lovely cookery of those regions to people who do not already know them, and to stir the memories of those who have... and who would like sometimes to bring a flavour of those blessed lands of sun and sea and olive trees into their English kitchens". Not all her dishes were for every day — but after the monotony of Spam and dried egg, who wanted them to be?



PEOPLE OF THE CENTURY

## STUMPING THE PUNDITS

An unexpected victory from an underestimated England team

After being saved by a storm in Brisbane and comprehensively outclassed in Perth and Adelaide, England's cricketers entered the fourth Ashes Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as lambs to the slaughter. The team had been flattened on all fronts, pummeled in the press and castigated on camera. Even the redoubtable Alec Stewart had been informed in no uncertain terms that the time had come for him to consider hanging up his boots, bat, pads and numerous other articles of equipment. As Australia breezed their way towards the disturbingly modest target of 175 runs and a 3-0 lead, the knives were once again sharpened. "It's nearly over" the London *Evening Standard* (first edition) screamed, "Australia are so close to series victory."

That newspaper is now stuck with the sporting equivalent of the *Chicago Tribune's* disastrous declaration of 50 years ago, "Dewey beats Truman". A cricket match, it appears, is not over until the Kent fast bowler sings or takes six swift wickets as an alternative. Dean Headley had, until yesterday, enjoyed a no more inspiring Australian tour than the rest of his team-mates. All of that was forgotten when, in a burst of utter brilliance, he took four wickets for four runs in 13 balls and suddenly altered the direction of an innings. Another blitz in which three

wickets disappeared for one run, the last two taken by Darren Gough, delivered an improbable but enthralling triumph.

The pundit class will, of course, quickly recover. The secret of England's comeback was, it will be said, Stewart's decision to abandon the role of wicketkeeper, thus allowing him to score a century much as the experts had anticipated. Headley's efforts, others will assert, were an event waiting for their moment. The most cynical joked yesterday that the entire Australian squad had acquired an enthusiasm for match-fixing. Others noted that England only seize their moment when the outcome of a series has already been determined.

None of this will matter one iota to the players and management. Having been dismissed so often as "headless chickens", they will savour the moment that they turned the tables on their tormentors, and the Australians. They will wallow in their transformation from no-hopers to national heroes. The fifth Test in Sydney might prove to be another crushing disappointment. This newspaper, as many others, may continue to ruminate in melancholy terms about the state of English cricket. For the moment it should be enough to congratulate the team on an extraordinary win and thank them for providing a little piece of August in late December.

## Conservation of a Sheffield 'eyesore'

From the Director of the Civic Trust

Sir, Your report (December 23) on the listing of postwar buildings draws attention to the dangers of adopting what I can only call an art historian's approach to architectural conservation. Buildings are viewed by some as representatives of abstract styles and historic form, rather than as living structures designed by and for the use of people.

In this small country, with immense pressures on housing stock and demand for new dwellings, we must ensure that we preserve only the best of our built heritage and that means, in addition to aesthetic quality, good, durable and adaptable designs. We simply do not have the space to preserve buildings as interesting curiosities, irrespective of their quality.

The Park Hill flats in Sheffield which you illustrated may be an intellectually interesting demonstration of a construction technique and genre, but they are also, arguably, an example of a monumental social and economic failure. Listing means they will be "preserved" indefinitely, along with their faulty designs and other weaknesses.

Historical exactitude does not come without a cost, and that could mean there is less money and space for other pressing priorities to achieve the wider and deeper urban renewal and renaissance we need so desperately.

Yours faithfully,  
MIKE WILLIAM,  
Director, Civic Trust,  
17 Carlton House Terrace,  
London SW1Y 6AW.  
December 23.

From Mr T. Wilson

Sir, As a schoolboy I observed the building of the Park Hill flats through the window of my schoolroom in the centre of Sheffield. With astonishment I watched as substantial Victorian stone-built terraces were razed and replaced by another concrete Le Corbusier lookalike.

Architectural importance cannot be judged in isolation; it must also take into account the social consequences of its existence. On this premise alone, during the past 40 years Park Hill has been a colossal disaster. I agree with the residents: "Buildings for?"

Yours faithfully,  
TERENCE WILSON,  
8 Clarksmead,  
Maldon Road, Tiptree,  
Colchester, Essex CO5 0BX.  
December 23.

From Mr Jason Berry

Sir, Countries across the world have made mistakes; some have apologised for them, most ignore them, but I've never heard of countries congratulating themselves for disasters such as Park Hill.

Yours sincerely,  
J. BERRY,  
44 Ranshaw Drive,  
Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6UB.  
December 23.

From Mr Michael Moore

Sir, Working on only the engineering design of Park Hill is one of the things I am most ashamed of doing. Now my shame is to be preserved for posterity. I must bear my burden for the public good because the voters of Sheffield must not be allowed to run away with the idea that it belongs to them.

Sheffield belongs to the civil servants, architects, engineers and politicians who do not tell the voters of the subsidies paid by the Government for building wasteful and unwanted multi-storey flats.

Yours etc,  
MICHAEL MOORE,  
38 The Ridge,  
Marple, Stockport SK6 7ER.  
11354726@compuserve.com  
December 23.

## Kerala's elephants

From Mr Ian Redmond

Sir, Your article highlighting Kerala's last Great Elephant March (Travel, December 17) did not mention why it is to be the last.

The event is being cancelled because of local and international criticism of the cruel treatment endured by the "101 decorated and jewelled elephants" to provide a photo opportunity for tourists. The Kerala Tourist Board is to be congratulated for listening to its critics and cancelling the march, which was a show put on for tourists and not a traditional festival.

The board is now going to offer "an exciting array of village, fairs and festivals" in 2000, to show visitors the true warmth of Kerala culture, and not a shameful circus of 101 chained elephants suffering in a hot sports stadium without shade or water. Ele-friendly Times readers heading for Kerala next month should avoid the last march and visit elephants in Periyar nature reserve for a truly wild start to the new year.

Yours faithfully,  
IAN REDMOND,  
(Wildlife consultant),  
Born Free Foundation,  
3 Grove House, Burying Lane,  
Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5PL.  
ele@bolton.net  
December 18.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 6NN Telephone 0171-752 5000

## Honour satisfied or mortgaged?

From Mr R. K. D. Shah

Sir, With all due respect to Jonathan Goldberg, QC (letter, December 24), it is too harsh a judgment to characterise as "a sham" the private arrangement between Geoffrey Robinson and Peter Mandelson. While admittedly there are other, wider, issues of political morality involved here, as any solicitor engaged in conveyancing practice will vouch, situations of this kind are not uncommon.

In most such cases the provider of finance is closely related to the recipient, usually but not necessarily a parent or grandparent. Unless there is an outright gift of the money advanced (not recommended by the tax advisers of the parties) the transaction is generally along the lines set out in the published letter (December 23) to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, backed perhaps by a signed but unregistered charge over the property purchased (which would serve as an equitable mortgage) or a declaration of trust, of the title deeds. Either of these would be enforceable, or capable of being crystallised, at the discretion of the loan creditor.

If there was a family connection between Mr Robinson and Mr Mandelson, then what happened in their case would hardly have warranted a comment and certainly not an inquiry. Why should friendship be treated any less favourably than family as the basis for one person to help another?

Yours truly,  
RAMNIK SHAH,  
As from: Previews & Co  
(Solicitors),  
113 London Road,  
Mitcham, Surrey CR4 2JA.  
rsh@clara.co.uk  
December 29.

From Mr Joe Haines

Sir, In January 1976, at the end of a socialist leaders' conference at Easington, the Dutch Prime Minister, Joop den Uyl, asked the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, for a lift back to London in our plane. Wilson willingly agreed.

Should Wilson have subsequently been arraigned by the Opposition or by a parliamentary committee for corruptly seizing an opportunity to bribe a fellow European Prime Minister in return for future, unspecified, favours? Should he have been condemned for spending taxpayers' money on behalf of an influential foreigner? More to the point, should the Dutch Prime Minister have been charged by his Parliament for receiving an undeclared benefit and consequently hounded from office?

Or have we become ridiculous in supposing that politicians can be so easily bribed by trifling favours that they must automatically be guilty of improper conduct unless they make

an immediate confession and apology to the House?

Yours faithfully,  
JOE HAINES,  
(Chief Press Secretary to the Prime Minister, 1974-76),  
South Frith, London Road,  
Southborough,  
Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 0UQ.  
December 29.

From Mr Christopher J. Watton

Sir, It has been my understanding that one who behaved honourably did nothing which would not bear public scrutiny. The Peter Mandelson affair seems to have given us a new definition of honour. Although he has behaved badly — by my standards dishonourably — he is apparently to be considered honourable because he resigned when his dishonourable behaviour was exposed to public scrutiny.

How very confusing.

Yours sincerely,  
CHRIS WATTON,  
Dalgemar, Searus Water,  
Penpont, Dumfriesshire DG3 4NN.  
chris.watton@lineone.net  
December 27.

From Mr David Axson

Sir, Members of Parliament, ministers or otherwise, do not resign because of their integrity. They do so because they have been found out.

Yours faithfully,  
DAVID AXSON,  
Weidays,  
Millon Avenue, Gerrards Cross,  
Buckinghamshire SL9 8QW.  
December 29.

From Mr Cyril Ellis

Sir, You report today, apropos of Charlie Whelan, that "Brown's man faces a long climb back to acceptance".

Surely any "pure" head of a political party would be pleased to have improper dealings revealed. Why then threaten the alleged whistleblower? Gratitude should be appropriate.

Yours etc,  
C. ELLIS,  
Flat 6, 46 Village Road,  
Enfield, Middlesex EN1 2EF.  
December 28.

From Mrs Hilary W. Bean

Sir, I'm beginning to suspect that there is not a single adult in the country pure enough to be an MP. What's to be done? Why, elect journalists instead, of course.

Yours faithfully,  
HILARY W. BEAN,  
22 Horsted Way,  
Rochester, Kent ME1 2KY.  
December 27.

## Balliol protest

From Ms Kate Atkinson

Sir, As one of the Balliol protesters, I agree with John Keegan (letter, December 12) that our universities need better funding if they are to maintain their teaching excellence.

Ideally university education should be free. The largest benefit of handing on knowledge flows to society as a whole, and it is right that the largest share of higher education is funded by general taxation. But students also benefit — eventually — from the extra earning power of a degree, and it is reasonable that they should also contribute.

Our quarrel is not with the principle of payment for tuition and maintenance, but the timing of that payment. The Government has introduced a means-tested tuition fee of £1,000 a year, and replaced maintenance grants of around £4,000 a year with student loans. We believe, strongly, that the prospect of leaving university with a debt of £12,000 will be a major deterrent to school-leavers from less affluent families, even with government promises that repayment of this debt will be contingent on their subsequent earnings. What will it mean, for example, for their ability to get a mortgage or a loan to set up a business?

The better way is for a graduate tax, levied on students for say 15-25 years after they graduate, at rates of 1.5-2.5 per cent of earnings, with the proceeds flowing directly through the Treasury back into university funding.

This avoids the deterrent effect of student debt; contributions will be out of our own income, not out of our parents'.

Yours faithfully,  
KATE ATKINSON,  
Balliol College, Oxford OX1 3BJ.  
katherine.atkinson@balliol.ox.ac.uk

From Mr Peter Tron

Sir, In his letter about the "Balliol protesters" (December 21) Professor Sir Graham Hills talks of their "privileged position". I should have thought that in most civilised societies education would be regarded not as a "privilege" but as a right, and the obligation upon one generation to educate the next as absolute and not financially negotiable.

It is a sad comment on our society that the struggle to defend this principle has had to be taken up, not by the educational establishment or politicians, but by individual students facing the full weight of institutional intimidation.

Yours sincerely,  
PETER TRON,  
130 The Street,  
Kirtling, Suffolk CB8 9PD.  
December 22.

From Mr Edward A. Russell

Sir, Surely it is not correct to refer to the years in the new millennium as two thousand and odd, as seems to be the current trend?

Is not the correct phrase twenty and odd, or am I to understand that the Battle of Hastings was in one thousand and sixty-six, the war ended in one thousand, nine hundred and forty-five, or indeed that I am writing this letter in one thousand, nine hundred and ninety-eight?

Yours faithfully,  
E. A. RUSSELL,  
26 Cauldwell Place,  
South Shields, NE34 0SA.  
December 29.

## The 51st state

From Dr Philip F. Roberts

Sir, Now that Puerto Rico has voted against being America's 51st state (report, December 15) why not give the British people a chance?

Consider the advantages. We would join the most powerful country, one of English-speaking peoples with a modern, vibrant democracy providing superb defence arrangements.

Lying as we do at the front door of Europe we would be the recipients of massive industrial development by the US to promote (our) American goods in Europe.

We would abolish the House of Lords at a stroke and have relative independence as a self-governing state with low taxes.

Distance would not be a problem as we are closer to Washington than is Hawaii.

Yours faithfully,  
PHILIP F. ROBERTS,  
123 Newmarket Road,  
Norwich NR4 6SZ.  
December 22.

## Regional galleries suffer in silence

From Dr Jeffrey Sherwin

Sir, No one can argue with the laudable intentions of the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, to do away with charges for gallery entrance (report, "Smith wants galleries to be free for all by 2001", December 15) and his setting aside of £30 million to effect these changes. But what help is being offered to those galleries that never charged in the first place? Nothing.

I am referring to the regional galleries, which are local-authority funded and which have shouldered their responsibilities to their local communities without a whimper, despite appalling lack of resources.

The lifeblood of any art gallery is its ability to put on exhibitions, yet because local authorities have competing needs, the funds available to regional art galleries are derisory. For example, Leeds City Art Gallery, with an immediate catchment area of half a million people, has an annual exhibition budget of less than £12,000.

Some regional galleries have more funds, some less. Tables of these figures are never published. The Government is eager to publish league tables for schools, so why not publish a league table of gallery exhibition budgets, including the nationals? Then it would be possible to have a proper debate. Certainly it would help to put the competing needs of galleries into perspective.

You report the Director of the Natural History Museum as saying he thought it unlikely that the subsidy of £30 million would be sufficient to cover the losses of those galleries which would have to scrap entry charges. Yet if just the interest alone on that money were handed out on a per capita basis to the regional galleries for exhibitions, the effect would be both immediate and dramatic.

Access for all — yes, but access to what? Why not keep the charges and let those of us who live in the regions benefit?

Yours sincerely,  
JEFFREY SHERWIN,  
(Chairman, Yorkshire Arts Association, 1982-83),  
Stoncroft House,  
Sandmoor Lane, Leeds LS17 7EA.  
December 23.

## Medical matters

From Mrs Peggy Edwards

Sir, Does the medical profession bless or curse Dr Stuttaford?

We all have varying degrees of hypochondria and one can imagine the doctor in his surgery thinking: "Here comes Mr/Mrs Patient. Been reading again." On the other hand, I am sure lives have been saved and illnesses arrested in time by people going to the doctor after reading the articles.

We are probably all going to take Dr Stuttaford's advice regarding red wine at this time of the year, but what about Della's pastry made with lard and butter, and custard made with a pint of double cream?

Good health, Dr Stuttaford, keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully,  
PEGGY EDWARDS,  
Paddock End,  
Ditchling, Sussex BN6 8UL.  
December 23.

## The strain of the train

From Mr M. R. K. Holden

Sir, Some years ago, British Rail promoted their services with the slogan "Let the train take the strain". In light of the appalling conditions many customers now endure, can we not find a more apt slogan for 1999?

Yours faithfully,  
M. R. K. HOLDEN,  
99 High Street,  
Linton, Cambridgeshire CB1 6JT.  
December 28.

## Ilse Noach

From Mr B. C. Peers

Sir, Your obituary notice of Ilse Noach, the Austrian-born psychoanalyst (December 18), states: "When war was declared, Ilse was employed by the Home Office, organising the evacuation of children from London."

As she recounted it to me, the job was a little more dramatic than that. On the outbreak of war she was dispatched to the Isle of Man as an enemy alien, but later reprieved because of a shortage of psychiatrists available to deal with the emotional problems of evacuees.

Yours faithfully,  
B. C. PEERS,  
108 Coleridge Court,  
Old Brompton Road, SW5 0ED.  
December 18.

## Naval security

From Mr Arthur Farrand Radley

Sir, In these troublous times it surely behoves the Royal Navy to watch its security even more closely now that your obituary notice of Admiral Sir Richard Thomas (December 18) has revealed that he was "appointed KGB".

Yours faithfully,  
ARTHUR FARRAND RADLEY,  
157 Holland Park Avenue, W11 4UX.  
December 22.







## OBITUARIES

## GLYN CHARLES

Glyn Charles, Olympic yachtsman, was lost at sea on December 27 aged 33. He was born on September 4, 1965.

Glyn Charles, who is presumed dead after being lost on Sunday while competing in the Sydney-Hobart yacht race, was one of a growing band of professional sailors seeking to make an impact on a sport that remains fiercely amateur.

He was born in Wales and educated at Pangbourne Nautical College, though he did not take up sailing as a sport until he was 13 — late by the standards of today, when youngsters are encouraged to take it in earnest from the age of five.

He was on the periphery of the British youth squad when, in 1982, he took time off from his A-level studies at Peter Symonds Sixth Form College and turned up unannounced at a Finn class dinghy Olympic indicator trial. "He had bought an old wooden Finn dinghy for £200," recalls Rod Carr, the sailing manager for the Royal Yachting Association, "which was all he could afford, and he needed help just to get off the beach." Weighing 11 stone when his competitors were closer to 15, both he and his boat were hopelessly outclassed. But Carr was impressed by his determination, and Charles soon earned the respect of those around him. Charles then persuaded him to try sailing the single-handed Laser, a boat which was much more suited to his weight.

That was all the encouragement Charles needed, and within a year he and two friends, also with their sights set on the Olympics, were travelling around Europe from one international regatta to the next in a beaten-up yellow Ford Transit van, which became their home and the base for some colourful adventures. Charles was still penniless and sleeping in his car when he first made a mark on the sailing scene by winning the highly competitive Laser national championship in 1985. Also in that year, his father, who had separated from his mother and was living in Andorra, died after falling from a ladder.

His father's death and his own victory increased Charles's determination to break into the Olympic league, and within a year he was sleeping a three-man Soling keel boat with ever-increasing success. This in turn won him the support of Norman Cunningham, a sailing philanthropist, as he nicknamed his captain. In 1995, Charles sailed Mike Golding's *Mumm 36 Group 4* in the Admiral's Cup, where he was pipped in the final trials by



Glyn Charles helming for Britain (with George Skoufos as his crew) in the Star class at the 1997 Olympic Games

Lawrie Smith, who remained an arch-rival for the rest of Charles's career.

Charles returned to the fray for the next Olympics and was delighted to win the pre-Olympic regatta at Barcelona in 1990, before Smith crushed his aspirations once more, first by poaching his crew and then by narrowly beating him in the trials for the 1992 Games.

After that disappointment Charles turned his attention to offshore racing, first representing Britain in the 1993 Champagne Mumm Admiral's Cup Series, aboard the one-tonner *GBE International*. Graham Walker, another long-standing patron of British sailing, then took him under his wing, employing Charles as a helmsman on his 30-footer *Indulgence* for the World Cup circuit.

In 1995, Charles sailed Mike Golding's *Mumm 36 Group 4* in the Admiral's Cup, where he was pipped in the final trials by

after being "bumped" off *Indulgence* by a rival helmsman, Chris Law.

He retained the support of Graham Walker, who stepped in to fund his third Olympic campaign, this time in a Star class keel boat. After finishing second at the Spa pre-Olympic regatta in Holland and fifth at the Biscaya Cup in Miami (arguably the toughest regatta of the year), Charles, now with George Skoufos as his crew, came up against his old rival Lawrie Smith in the final trials. After a disastrous opening race, Charles and Skoufos went on to win every other heat, and so made it, finally, to the Olympics, where they finished 11th.

A highly-strung competitor, Charles had since become a more rounded character as he prepared for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. He did not marry.

## FRANK WILLIAMSON

Frank Williamson, QPM, former Chief Constable and HM Inspector of Constabulary, 1967-72, died on Christmas Day aged 81. He was born on February 27, 1917.



IT WAS a report in *The Times* naming three police officers in connection with bribery that sparked the investigation into corruption at Scotland Yard set up by James Callaghan as Home Secretary in 1969. Initially it was expected to last just two months, but it was to go on for years, and grew into the biggest and most damaging of all such clean-ups.

To lead the inquiry, Callaghan astutely called upon one of the most experienced of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary, Frank Williamson, but he underestimated the longstanding antipathy in the Metropolitan Police towards officers from provincial forces. Although other forces were by then just as well equipped and professional as the Met, London officers arrogantly maintained a sense of superiority, and were loath to have their operations investigated by an outsider. Williamson was believed to be the first non-Met officer ever to investigate the Met.

Sadly, he was not given sufficient powers by Callaghan, and found himself ostracised at Scotland Yard, where a culture of mutual protection prevailed. He later claimed that he found "not a rotten apple but a barrel of rotten apples", and that he was obstructed even by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir John Waldron. The officer assigned to him as his deputy in the inquiry, Bill Moody, was himself corrupt, and when Williamson complained about him he was told: "We know he's bent, but he's the best we can do." Later Moody was convicted of taking bribes from a pornographer.

As an outsider attempting to uncover what had gone on, Williamson was obstructed systematically. Files were destroyed, papers were stolen from his office, and his phone was tapped. Like Kenneth Starry, he was also subjected to sneers by those he was investigating. As a result, he managed to charge only three officers in two years.

In July 1971 he reported his fears about the lack of co-operation and his inability to advance his inquiry to the new Conservative Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, but the always laid-back Maudling did not give him full support, and at the end of the year Williamson resigned in disgust. The inquiry, however, was carried on by the new Commissioner of the Met, Robert Mark (now Sir Robert), who made it his priority, on his appointment in April 1972, to rid the force of corruption. He swiftly set up the A10 branch to investigate complaints

against the police, and eventually 13 officers were jailed and 478 took euphemistic "early retirement".

Mark himself had been brought to Scotland Yard by Roy Jenkins from the Leicester force, having been introduced to the beat by Williamson many years before, and his appointment as head of the Met resulted in a further show of defiance against outsiders, when Peter Brodie, the Old Harrovian Assistant Commissioner, abruptly resigned.

Williamson had faith in "the absolute integrity of the great majority of police officers", but was concerned that many were unwilling to investigate their own colleagues. In an interview in 1973, however, he said that he did not believe that an independent inquiry board, not staffed by policemen, could ever deal effectively with police corruption. "Outsiders do not understand police work, and cannot separate complaints about a man doing his legitimate duty from com-

plaints against a policeman who exceeds or falls short of his duty. They have no police experience to draw on."

Frank Williamson was the son of the Chief Constable of Northampton, where he was educated at Northampton Grammar School before joining the Manchester City Police in 1936.

After Army service during the war and three years with the Military Police in Europe, he returned to his force, where he became a sergeant in 1953. Five years later he was a detective superintendent, and in 1961 he became Chief Constable of the Cumberland, Westmoreland and Carlisle force.

In 1965 he investigated the Southend police force, after the suspension of its Chief Constable, who was subsequently jailed. Williamson was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in 1966, and in the following year he switched full-time from police work itself to become an Inspector of Constabulary, with a brief to ensure that crime was tackled uniformly everywhere.

In 1968 he recommended a strengthening of the regional crime squads, with their emphasis on the investigation of criminals rather than specific crimes.

His appointment to head the inquiry into the Met, from Tinsagel House, an office block on the South Bank, should have been the peak of his career, but instead it ended in disappointment and some bitterness.

After his resignation he became head of security for the Co-op, based in Manchester, and then for ICI. A few years ago he assisted the writer Peter Flannery in his reconstruction of the investigation of the Met in the BBC drama *Our Friends in the North* (1996).

He is survived by his wife, Margaret, whom he married in 1943, and by their daughter.

## ERNEST PERRY

Ernest Perry, Labour MP for Battersea South, 1964-79, died on December 28 aged 90. He was born on April 25, 1908.

ERNEST PERRY was a typical Labour MP of his time. He shopped at the Co-op and joined his union as soon as he

left school. He knew local government at every level, from fighting a hopeless ward in 1931 to becoming mayor of his borough. He was loyal to his leadership in the Commons, but inevitably this led to a falling-out with sections of his local party during Labour's leftward drive in the late

1970s. Feeling "bounded and harassed", he decided not to stand for re-election in 1979.

Perry began his education at London County Council secondary schools and completed it at evening classes and with correspondence courses from the National Council of Labour Colleges. An insurance

man by trade, he spent his war with the Royal Artillery in India and Burma, and was demobilised with the rank of troop sergeant. He was a good NCO in the Army and he was to prove a good NCO in the Parliamentary Labour Party as a whip both in Government and in Opposition.

Always interested in politics, Perry was president of the Battersea Labour Party and Trades Council and was Mayor of Battersea, 1955-56. With his record he was a natural choice to become the 1964 Labour candidate in Battersea South, a Tory-held seat (in contrast with the Labour stronghold of Battersea North where the MP was Douglas Jay), which he won by 1,638 votes and held, despite its gentrification, in every election until he retired.

In the House he never attempted to be a major orator or a high-flyer, but he was essentially reliable, as was evidenced by his appointment as a whip, in various ranks, from 1968 to 1975.

But reliability was not the main quality required in the Labour Party at the end of the 1970s. There were complaints about his age — he was 67 at the time — and suggestions that a visit to South Africa (where he met his granddaughter) was ill-timed. But underlying all this was the feeling that he was too far to the right. He pre-empted deselection by resigning well before the next general election.

When this came, the successful Battersea South candidate was Alfred Dubs, certainly to the left of Perry, but hardly an extreme left-winger, who is now Lord Dubs.

Perry's retirement was briefly clouded by an arrest for shoplifting in a Battersea supermarket, but he was cleared by a magistrates' court.

Before becoming an MP he acted as president of the Federation of British Cremation Authorities and served on the Battersea, Tooting and Putney Hospital Group Management Committee.

He was married in 1950 to Edna Joyce Perks-Mankelov, who died two months ago. He is survived by their son and by two stepsons.

## AIR VICE-MARSHAL G. R. MAGILL

Air Vice-Marshal G. R. ("Digger") Magill, CB, CBE, DFC and Bar, died on December 1 aged 83. He was born on January 23, 1915.



DIGGER MAGILL made newspaper headlines at the start of the 1960s when he was identified as "the officer who would press the nuclear button". It followed his appointment in No 1 Court at the Old Bailey, where a number of "beat-the-bomb" demonstrators were accused of breaching national security at a US Air Force base in East Anglia.

Then an air commodore serving in the Air Ministry as director of operations, Magill was indeed the officer who would have launched Britain's V-bomber force, armed with the country's strategic nuclear deterrent, if Armageddon had been facing the world.

His role was revealed to the public when he appeared as the chief prosecution witness in the trial — earning him unthought and embarrassing publicity. Still worse was the abuse he received from demonstrators and in numerous letters, at a time when nuclear disarmament was a highly contentious issue.

The post which he occupied from 1959 until 1962, was in other ways too, a frustrating one for Magill. Much of his time was spent outlining the RAF's case for retaining the nuclear deterrent in the face of competition from the Navy. This ended in defeat for the RAF in 1962, with cancellation of the Skybolt air-launched missile programme and its replacement by the submarine-launched Polaris system.

Magill, therefore, left Whitehall with few regrets to become commandant of the RAF College of Air Warfare at Cranwell, Lincolnshire. Within

two years, however, he was back in the newly unified Ministry of Defence as Director-General of Organisation — a key position in the mid-1960s, when the RAF braced itself for further contraction with the withdrawal from East of Suez.

In 1967 he produced the Magill Report, which helped to save the university air squadrons from the axe. He retired at the beginning of 1970, after more than three decades in the RAF, reflecting that at the outset he had meant to serve only four years.

Graham Reese Magill was born in Cambridge, New Zealand, the son of a draper whose parents had emigrated there from Co Antrim. He earned the sobriquet "Digger" as a child and was rarely known by any other name thereafter. Although he did well at Te Aroha High School, he declined to go to university — a decision he always regretted — opting instead to train as an electrical engineer at Hamilton Technical College.

He left there after just a year and then worked for a while as a journalist before

deciding that he wanted to fly. On the advice of his local flying club, he scraped together enough money to pay for his passage to Britain in order to try for an RAF short-service commission, intending to return to New Zealand as a civil pilot. When the RAF accepted him in 1936, he was down to his last few shillings.

Magill's first operational posting was to Khartoum and, once war broke out, he spent the first part of it flying missions against the Italians in Abyssinia. He won his first DFC there in 1941, and also served in Cairo and the Western Desert before returning to Britain and bombing assignments in NW Europe.

One of his most frightening missions involved laying smoke above the beach at Dieppe flying "virtually on the deck" along the highwater mark. He could see the anti-aircraft batteries on the cliffs above train their guns on him as he approached. But they had not aimed far enough in front of him, and blew up the plane just behind.

He won the bar to his DFC in 1943, by that time an acting wing commander. The citation referred to one sortie when he flew back to base in his badly damaged bomber, its cabin awash with high-octane fuel which could have caught fire at any moment. The experience left him with a lifelong hatred of the smell of petrol.

He married his wife Betty in 1942 after meeting her at RAF Upwood, where she had been serving as an officer in the WAAF. On his retirement they lived in Majorca for 20 years, returning in 1960 because of her worsening arthritis. She died in the following year and Magill, who had been fighting cancer, is survived by two sons.

## PERSONAL COLUMN

## DEATHS

ST. GERMAN'S: Bridge, Countess of, widow of Sir Earl, peacefully at home on 28th December 1998, aged 90. Burial at St. German's Church, Cornwall, 2.30pm on Tuesday 5th January 1999, followed by cremation at Glyn Valley, Family Services only, but donations to Mount Edgcombe Hospice, c/o Port Eilat Estate, St. German's, Cornwall.

STEVENS: Eric, died peacefully at home in Suffolk. Much loved father of Veronica and Caroline, grandfather and great-grandfather, husband of the late Eleanor. Funeral at Great Easton on Tuesday 5th January at 12.00 noon. Donations to The Cancer Research Society, c/o W.A. Deacon, High Laverham, Suffolk.

WENTWORTH: Marybeth, wife of James and mother of David, Sharon and Jack died peacefully at Bournemouth on Christmas Day. Private family funeral. Memorial Service to be announced later.

WHITFIELD: Ian, aged 52, suddenly on Boxing Day after a valiant fight against cancer. Funeral Services at St. John the Baptist Church, Charlton, on Wednesday January 7th at 11.30 a.m. Flowers (no cellophane please) or donations if desired to Beth Cancer Research Unit, c/o H. & C. Matthews, Funeral Directors, 7 Burnham Rd, Malmesbury, SN16 0BP. Tel: 01666-82215.

WILSON: Janet, died December 28th, aged 88 years, wife of Ray, mother of Margaret and Richard, and Gran to Karen, Daniel, James and Adam. The Funeral Service at St. Mary's Church, Warwick, at 2.15 pm on 4th January, conducted by Marion's brother, Canon David Brown, Southgate Episcopal Church, will be followed by private cremation. No flowers. Donations to the World Cancer Trust, Murrenville, Castle, Murrenville, Castle, Murrenville, Castle.

IN MEMORIAM PRIVATE.

CONWAY: Dr DS. 38th December 1998, always remembered.

MATTHEWS: Kinanathia always in our thoughts never to be forgotten ever. Mum and your children.

SERVICES

INSURANCE: a police deal, one month's notice, call 0118 959 1233

## TICKETS FOR SALE

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WINTER



## NEWS

## Three Britons killed in Yemen

Three British hostages and one Australian were killed and three other Westerners injured in Yemen when government troops stormed the hideout of an Islamic kidnap gang. The botched rescue attempt in the remote southern town of al-Wadeaa was launched by security forces the day after terrorists, demanding the release of their leaders, seized 16 tourists. Ten of the holidaymakers were safely back in Aden amid confusion over the circumstances of the rescue attempt. Pages 1, 5

## Term travel could harm education

Travel companies are to be asked to warn parents in their brochures that they risk damaging their children's education by taking them on holiday in term time. The move follows an appeal by ministers to help stem the growth in unauthorised absence from school. Page 1

## Sickness score sheet

Patients needing an operation should be given a "severity score" to show how quickly they get surgery, the British Medical Association says today. The system would lead to a fairer, more transparent waiting list management system, a report says. Page 2

## End to feudal lands

Scotland's feudal land-owning system is to be abolished under plans to be unveiled next week to help communities to buy land from the noble families which have controlled it since the Middle Ages. Page 2

## Top eatery in court

One of Delia Smith's favourite restaurants pleaded guilty yesterday to seven breaches of food hygiene and safety regulations. The television cook is a regular customer at Brasted's, in the old part of the City of Norwich. Page 3

## Au pair trial regret

The lawyer who led Louise Woodward's defence team has said that he may have erred in holding back evidence that could have implicated the older brother of Matthew Eappen in the eight-month-old baby's death. Page 3

## Blair dominates

Tony Blair's overwhelming dominance of British politics and his personal stamp on government is disclosed today in a survey of politicians' public impact. Page 4

## Best-looking man not any old Joe

All his life people told Joe Blackwood how good-looking he was and he believed them. Now Mr Blackwood, 29, has sent his photograph to the Guinness Book of Records demanding to be entered as the "best-looking man in the world". "I have always known I was handsome but it was only recently that I got the desire to do something about it," he said. Page 3

## A disastrous year

Hurricane Mitch, Typhoon Vicki and the winter storms which ravaged Britain made 1998 the worst on record for natural disaster world-wide. More than 700 so-called "large loss events", killing an estimated 50,000 people, have been recorded by insurers Munich Re. Page 7

## Sober plans for 2000

Museums and art galleries will offer a sobering antidote to the triumphalism of the Millennium Dome in 2000 with sombre exhibitions exploring themes of death, and decadence. Page 8

## Russia debt inquiry

Russia has announced a security force investigation into the disappearance of billions of dollars over the three weeks in August when the Russian banking system virtually collapsed. Page 11

## Khmer Rouge 'sorry'

Senior Khmer Rouge leaders have apologised, for the first time, for the suffering they caused, when an estimated 1.7 million people died during the movement's reign of terror. Page 12

## Iraqis remain defiant

Iraq, determined to remain in the international spotlight, claimed last night that its warplanes had defied "no-fly" zones policed by British and American aircraft, which it again vowed to shoot down. Page 13



A 70ft inflatable Betty Boop will sashay among a host of helium-filled stars for the New Year's Day parade in central London on Friday.

## BUSINESS

**Flying high:** The stock market yesterday shook off a post-Christmas hangover to post a five-month high despite concerns about the introduction of the euro across Europe later this week. Page 21

**Failures up:** The annual rate of business failures has risen for the first time since the last recession as the economic slowdown begins to bite. Page 21

**Housing market:** House prices will rise by only 4 per cent next year, according to the Halifax, the UK's biggest lender. Page 21

**Markets:** The FTSE 100 index rose 74.30 points to 5941.5. The pound rose 0.91 cents to \$1.6826 and also climbed 0.81 pence to DM2.8136. The sterling index rose to 101.2 from 100.8. Page 24

**Cricket:** If he never takes another Test wicket, Dean Headley will recall the day that he began as a night-watcher and ended with six wickets to defeat Australia. Page 37

**Football:** Michael Oakes, the Aston Villa goalkeeper, is to have his dismissal in the match against Blackburn Rovers expunged from the records after the referee reviewed the incident on video. Page 40

**Rugby union:** The Barbarians beat Leicester 38-24 in the holiday match at Welford Road in front of a crowd of nearly 15,000. Page 32

**Simon Barnes:** "What is the most satisfying experience in sport? Winning, we say at once, but even as we speak the word, our lips stumble over it. Because it is not quite true. Almost — but not quite." Page 34

**Race winners:** Sanjeev Bhaskar, the man who gave Asians a comic voice in *Goodness Gracious Me*, talks about Peter Sellers and other unlikely heroes. Page 30

**Rising star:** This week's Great British Hope is a 19-year-old folk musician who is making inroads into traditional Irish music — despite coming from Kent. Page 30

**Unsung heroes:** In the first of a short series celebrating forgotten figures in 20th-century arts, Rodney Milnes pays tribute to the composer Leslie Stuart. Page 31

**Off Broadway:** In New York, Benedict Nightingale investigates three new plays by young dramatists, including *Wit*, by Margaret Edson, and Kenneth Lonergan's *This Is Our Youth*. Page 31

**Brave new world:** Is the golden age of discovery over? Probably not — many scientists believe that extraordinary progress will be made in the next century. Page 14

**Nigel Hawkes:** Doubts about a universal "truth", the sandpiper's radar-like detection skills. Page 14

**Christmas child:** In sub-zero temperatures, the car carrying the pregnant Albanian had broken down. How peace monitors in Kosovo helped to deliver a baby on Christmas Day. Page 15

**Getaway:** "Desperate to escape the claustrophobia for a few days, we have been staying in East Hampton, summer home to celebrities including Steven Spielberg and Ralph Lauren." Joanna Coles and family flee Manhattan. Page 15

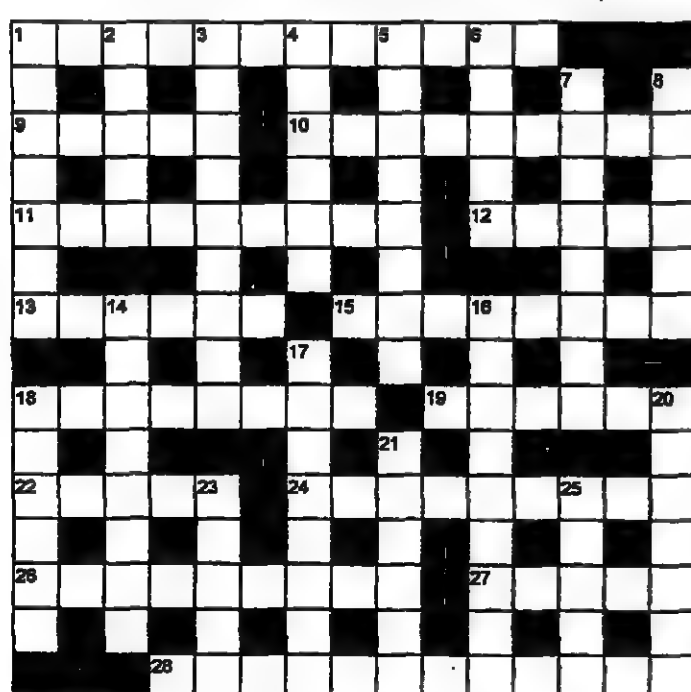
**Clean break:** Why move house when you can just clear out your clutter? Page 28

The creation of the euro is an historic milestone on the path toward European union. It will push European countries to adopt similar economic policies while depriving individual nations of significant powers they now enjoy. At best, it will make Europe into an economic machine rivaling the United States. At worst, it will lead to political strife within the Continent. *The New York Times*

**Glynis Charles:** Olympic yachtswoman; Frank Williamson, former Chief Constable; Air Vice-Marshal G. R. Magill. Page 19

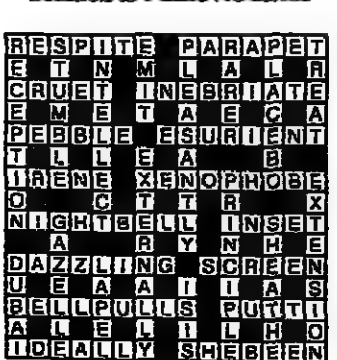
**Sheffield "eyesore":** Mandelson: regional art galleries; Baffoi protest; Kerala's elephants. Page 17

## THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,987



- ACROSS**
- Female who's a cold fish without any weak point (8,4).
  - Indifferent about parliament retaining power (5).
  - Ship, at sea, not like a Queen? (3,6).
  - Study's 2nd, terribly so, for literary antiquarian (9).
  - The stuff a corporal's made of (5).
  - Language used in trading concern, we hear (6).
  - Only a small part of the tiff I, unfortunately, had (8).
  - Sort of party that succeeds Labour (8).
  - Drinking den, retreat of policemen and of poets (6).
  - Suit's expensive, cut in classical style (5).
  - Having cover giving protection from complex projectile (9).

## Solution to Puzzle No 20,986



- Works with company, say, turning round wooden vessels (9).
- Indication of resignation in house, by friend abandoning leader (2-3).
- A lot of cards carried by irritating people in supermarket containers (7,5).
- Bill and another man in court were a nuisance (5,2).
- Jolly lucky (5).
- City once invested in this, madly perhaps (9).
- Book a popular flight (6).
- Old part of Europe — find short breaks there extremely popular (8).
- Correspondence that's sent bit by bit (1-4).
- Aggressive gang member fell upon leader (8).
- Field marshal's excusably bad language? (6).
- Obscure study, perhaps, in which negative results are fixed (5).
- Tailor isn't sharp enough to make one swap cutters, say (5-1).
- Daff as he, they, might be? (8).
- Ornament stile boy found in stream (6).
- Posts for soldiers not in the ranks? (7).
- Cheese's, say, in piece of cake (6).
- What's caught with fishing equipment goes in here (5).
- Rules of behaviour traditional in society, not new (5).

Times Two Crossword, page 40

## AA INFORMATION

**Latest Road and Weather conditions**  
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## General

General: mild everywhere. Eastern parts of England and Scotland rather dull this morning with patchy rain and strong winds. The winds will be gale-force across NE Scotland. It will brighten slowly, and the wind will ease this afternoon. W. England, Wales, W. Scotland and N. Ireland will start windy and cloudy. Sunny breaks will develop, but western coasts will see drizzly rain, showers elsewhere, heaviest in northwest. Tonight, rain in E will move away to leave lighter winds and clear periods. Cloud will increase in W with rain possible by dawn.  
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 30 1998

## Failure rate up by 6% as slowdown takes toll

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE annual rate of business failures has risen for the first time since the last recession as the economic slowdown begins to bite, a new survey published today shows.

However, separate data published yesterday confirmed that consumer appetite for credit and mortgages is yet to suffer a marked downturn despite the rapidly slowing economy.

The number of business failures increased by 6.2 per cent to total 38,636 in 1998, according to new research published by Dun & Bradstreet today. The increase was the first since 1992, with the business failure rate showing a marked rise in the second half of the year.

Philip Mellor, senior analyst for Dun & Bradstreet, said: "The high cost of the pound and the slowdown in the world economy are the main contributors to what has been a fairly rapid downturn in business solvency."

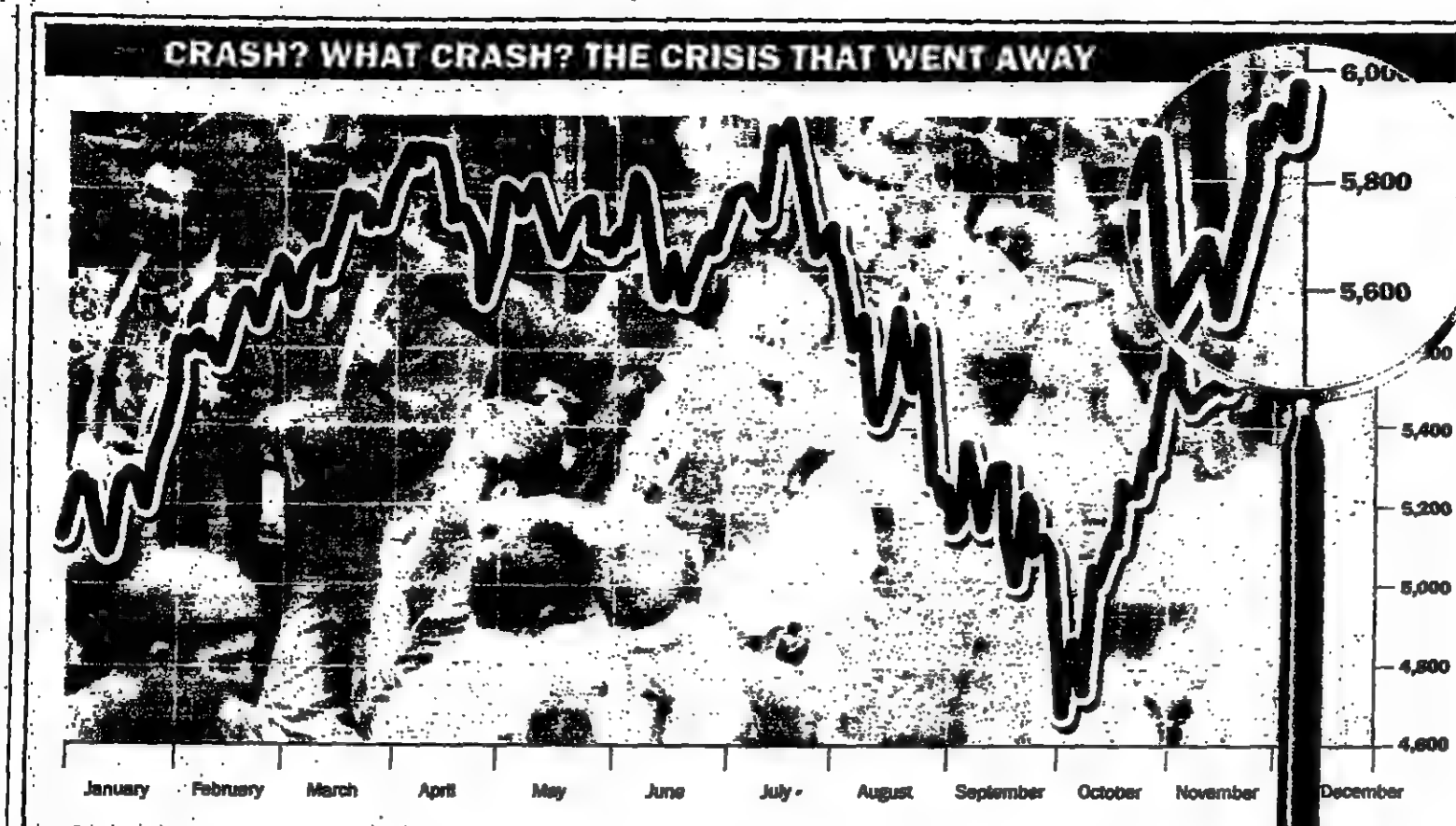
However, Martin Farrow, head of the small and medium-sized enterprise unit at the Confederation of British Industry, pointed out that the overall level of failures remains much lower than in the last recession, suggesting that small businesses are much less financially exposed.

"This supports the view that although things may get worse, the downturn will not be as long or as deep as last time around," Mr Farrow added.

Worst-hit regions were the industrial heartlands of the East Midlands and Scotland where failures increased by more than 15 per cent. The South East and South West, however, recorded further modest falls in the number of companies suffering bankruptcy.

The separate British Bankers' Association lending data for November showed a modest decline in new mortgage lending in line with the traditional end-of-year slowdown in the housing market. Credit card and overdraft borrowing, however, increased, suggesting that consumers are still happy to raise short-term borrowings before Christmas.

New mortgage loans totalled £8.24, with a total value of £3.05 billion, a decline of about 10 per cent from October. Credit card borrowing showed a modest 5 per cent increase to £4.26 billion, with net lending climbing £412 million, the largest monthly rise for almost a year.



## Shares surge to leave index near record high

By ALASDAIR MURRAY AND MICHAEL CLARK

THE stock market yesterday shook off a post-Christmas hangover to post a five-month high despite concerns about the introduction of the euro later this week.

The FTSE 100 index of leading shares climbed 74.3 points to 5,941.5 although trading was extremely thin with volume registering only 262 million shares as most investors opted to remain on the sidelines ahead of the start of the euro.

The strong performance in London, dubbed "the Santa Claus rally", continued on Wall Street, which overcame an indifferent opening to prolong its seven-day rise. By lunchtime in

New York, the Dow Jones industrial average had risen about 75 points to within 70 points of its all-time high.

Other European markets also posted modest rises with trading limited by the imminent birth of the euro. In Paris shares closed up 0.4 per cent while the Dax in Frankfurt recorded a rise of 0.3 per cent.

In London, market activity was largely limited to leading institutions topping up their holdings of blue chip shares ahead of the year end. The stock squeeze helped the market to make early gains of more than 100 points, leaving the FTSE within a whisker of

the 6,000 year-end level predicted by many long-term bulls. The FTSE 100 is set to end the year up 14 per cent.

Leading the bulls with its year-end forecast almost spot on was Warburg Dillon Reed, the broker. Its forecast of 6,000 for the FTSE 100 may even be matched during today's shortened trading session if share prices continue to be spurred on by stock shortages.

Warburg stood out alone at least 300-points above its nearest rivals NatWest Markets and BZW, now part of Credit Suisse First Boston, which were both perched on 5,700. They were followed on 5,600 by

Dresdner Kleinwort Benson and UBS, which was swallowed up by Swiss Bank Corporation this year and is now part of Warburg Dillon Reed. Chase Manhattan was the most bearish with a forecast of 5,300.

Activity was almost non-existent on the foreign exchanges despite Oskar Laffont, a European Central Bank board member, telling *Stern* magazine in Germany that the ECB would leave interest rates at 3 per cent for the "foreseeable" future.

Herr Laffont said he saw no near-term danger of either deflation or inflation and strongly criticised attempts by Oskar Lafontaine, the German Finance

Minister, to improve global interest rate co-ordination in order to stabilise exchange rates.

European markets, however, remain confident that the ECB will cut rates in the first part of 1999 in an effort to limit an expected slowdown in growth.

The dollar slipped slightly against the mark to trade at DM1.6990. The pound shrugged off fears of post-euro volatility to close up nearly a penny at £1.012. Sterling also made modest gains against the dollar to close at \$1.6826 and rose from 100.8 to 101.2 on its trade-weighted index.

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## Russia rejects interest payment demand

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE Russian Government yesterday rejected a final demand to pay \$360 million in interest payments, leaving Western creditors fearful that the country could be on the verge of full-scale default.

Mikhail Zadornov, Russian Finance Minister, confirmed that Russia would not pay the interest ahead of yesterday's deadline, but said that non-payment did not amount to default.

The Russian Government claims it has won the support of 70 per cent of the London Club of commercial creditors for a plan to restructure some \$30 billion of debt inherited from the Soviet era.

However, some creditors argued that Russia requires a full 95 per cent of creditors to accept debt restructuring and that by failing to pay the latest interest payment, Russia is effectively in default.

Bank of America, which is acting as paying agent on the loans, said creditors would take further legal advice on the debt position.

Russia's latest debt problems came as Sergei Stepashin, Russia's Interior Minister, revealed the Government was conducting an investigation into allegations that Central Bank officials had fraudulently wasted "billions of dollars" and were responsible for the crisis that led to the devaluation of the rouble in August.

However, Sergei Dubinin, the former head of the Central Bank, immediately hit back at the allegations, claiming the investigation was a politically inspired attempt to discredit the previous Government.

Mr Dubinin said that reports that the Central Bank had siphoned \$9 billion abroad were inaccurate and based on a misreading of statistics compiled to estimate illegal capital flight from Russia.

Mislead billions, page 11

## BUSINESS TODAY

**STOCK MARKET INDICES**

FTSE 100	5941.5	(+74.3)
Yield	2.74%	
FTSE All Share	2893.58	(+30.24)
Nikkei	13846.80	(+137.84)
Dow Jones	9228.02	(+51.27)
S&P Composite	1238.02	(+10.53)

**US RATE**

Federal Funds	5.75%	(5.75%)
Long bond	101 1/4	(100 3/4)
Yield	5.16%	(5.23%)

**LONDON MONEY**

3-mth interbank	6 1/4	(6 1/4)
Libor long GR	118.67	(118.42)

**STERLING**

New York	1.6826	(1.6740)
London	1.6826	(1.6740)
DM	2.8139	(2.8120)
FF	1.3577	(1.3577)
SP	1.3577	(1.3577)
Yen	115.38	(115.16)
S index	104.8	(105.2)

Tokyo close Yen 118.35

**NORTH SEA OIL**

Brent 15-day (Mar)	\$10.55	(vib)
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**GOLD**

London close	\$366.78	(\$366.25)
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\* denotes midday trading prices

## Flotations sink

The UK stock market has all but closed to smaller companies seeking to finance their growth, with trading companies raising just £40 million in the final quarter, according to figures from KPMG Corporate Finance.

Page 22

## Wide berth

Vardon, the health and fitness club operator, has terminated its joint venture with Peter Beckwith, the multi-millionaire, under which the up-market Harbour Club brand would have been rolled out across Europe.

Page 23

## LTCM partners will not receive bonus

FROM OLIVER AUGUST  
IN NEW YORK

JOHN MERIWETHER, the founder of Long Term Capital Management, will be paid an annual salary of \$250,000 but no bonus, it has emerged.

Mr Meriwether and the other partners at the failed hedge

fund were angered by reports that they will personally benefit from a \$50 million bonus paid to LTCM at the year end.

The bonus, which was agreed by the consortium that bailed out the hedge fund in the autumn, will be used to pay legal expenses incurred during the protracted bailout

negotiations. The salaries of \$20,000 for each of the partners who oversaw Wall Street's most spectacular collapse in a decade were set as part of the bailout.

The \$50 million company bonus results from an agreement that guarantees the partners a 15 per cent cut of all profits

above the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor), as well as a 1 per cent management fee on the \$4 billion invested.

The future of LTCM is still uncertain and Mr Meriwether has not given up hope that he could one day regain control of the fund.

Goldman Sachs twice tried

to broker a deal under which Warren Buffett, the American investor, would buy out the consortium. But Mr Buffett insisted on dismissing Mr Meriwether and his team. Goldman then approached Prince al-Waleed bin Talal, the Saudi investor. Negotiations are said to be on hold.

## House prices to rise by 4%, says Halifax

By CAROLINE MERRELL

HOUSE prices will rise by only 4 per cent next year, according to the Halifax, the UK's biggest lender.

This rise follows an increase in house prices this year of between 5 per cent and 6 per cent. Unusually, the Halifax's predictions for house prices next year are more optimistic than those by the Nationwide Building Society.

The Nationwide claims that prices will rise by around 3 per cent. It says that over the past 12 months house prices have increased by around 7 per cent. The society claimed: "Although market conditions are likely to deteriorate further, we see many reasons for being optimistic about an improvement during the second half of 1999."

According to the Halifax, average UK house prices returned to their 1989 peak in March of this year. Although prices remain some 24 per cent below their late-Eighties peak after an allowance is made for retail price inflation.

The average standardised price of a UK house in the first 11 months of 1998 reached £71,923.

Martin Ellis, Halifax economist, said: "We are on course to see a much more muted housing market cycle this time around, with neither the boom or bust in prices that we have seen on previous occasions. These are signs of a fundamentally healthy market."

The house price inflation of the late Eighties saw prices rocket by more than 20 per cent a year. In 1998, for example, house prices rose by 23.3 per cent. However, in 1992 prices fell by around 5.6 per cent.

House price rises varied widely across the country during the year. The steepest increases were experienced by those in London. In the first quarter of the year, annual house price inflation was running at about 12.4 per cent. Northern Ireland also showed some steep rises on the back of the peace-making process.



Sir Stuart Hampson, chairman of the John Lewis stores group, which saw sales dip in the early weeks of December

## Late rush boosts John Lewis

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM, RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

JOHN LEWIS, the department store group, said that a last-minute rush of Christmas shoppers should ensure that December trading will be in line with last year, in spite of sluggish demand earlier in the month.

Brian O'Callaghan, its director of trading (department stores), said that brisk trade in

the final few days before Christmas "has enabled us to eliminate the shortfall from the first three weeks of December and we expect to close the month in line with last year."

John Lewis is the only big retailer to publish weekly sales figures.

Most retailers were complaining that trade was very slow ahead of Christmas, and many began sales early in order to draw in shoppers. First reports from the post-Christmas winter sales are of reasonably brisk trade.

Mr O'Callaghan said that Christmas Day falling on a Friday, giving an extra shopping day in the run-up week, "has had a significant impact

on the overall picture for the month."

John Lewis, which is under the chairmanship of Sir Stuart Hampson, last week reported that sales were down 3.6 per cent in the week to December 19, down 2.9 per cent in the week to December 12 and down 4 per cent in the week to December 5.

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# Outgoing regulator attacks power plant ban

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY  
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

THE BAN on most new gas-fired power stations should be relaxed as soon as possible in order to boost competition, according to the electricity regulator, who yesterday took a last swipe at the Government.

Stephen Littlechild, who is to leave the post tomorrow, said: "The policy

of restricting new entry into generation is now the main obstacle to a more competitive electricity market.

"A continuing threat to incumbents from new entrants is of the utmost importance in preventing collusion, and in ensuring that reforms to trading arrangements are successful and deliver benefits to customers, particularly in the form of lower prices."

The Government put a de facto

moratorium on new gas-fired power stations last year amid a crisis in the coal industry. In its energy White Paper it pledged to continue that ban, although small environmentally friendly schemes are likely to slip through the net. The ban flies in the face of Professor Littlechild's logic that competition in generation — which has been widely seen as being lacking — will only be increased by the arrival

of many new players. The Government instead chose to force the big generators National Power and PowerGen to sell some of their capacity in order to stimulate the market.

Professor Littlechild also warned regional electricity companies they would face tighter controls on their distribution costs than they hope. After they submitted their estimates ahead of the next pricing plan — to ap-

ply from 2000 — the regulator said: "It is too soon to form a judgment in detail, but I certainly hope that it will be possible to set more challenging targets than the companies propose."

Professor Littlechild is leaving to make way for a new joint electricity and gas regulator, Callum McCarthy takes the dual role in the new year.

Commentary, page 23

## Flotations slump as small firms lose favour

By PAUL DURMAN

THE UK stock market has all but closed to smaller companies seeking to finance their growth, according to figures from KPMG Corporate Finance.

In the last three months, only three trading companies have raised money through a flotation. Biogen Pharma, Financial Objects and MSW Technology raised less than £40 million between them — the smallest quarterly total recorded by KPMG in the 1990s.

Even including new investment trusts and demergers of companies such as Fairview Holdings, the householder previously owned by Hiltedown Holdings, there were only 14 new listings in the final quarter, and only 68 over the year as a whole. In contrast, 40 companies lost their listing in the last three months.

Neil Austin, head of new issues at KPMG Corporate Finance, said: "It's not new is-

sues that have fallen out of favour. Smaller quoted companies have fallen out of favour with investors. Because most new issues are small cap stocks, they've got caught up in it."

Shares in small companies have persistently underperformed larger companies in recent years. It is also difficult for large institutional investors to invest in small companies to make it worth their while.

Last year's flotations raised a total of £3.9 billion; in 1997, 100 companies raised £6.7 billion, and in 1996, 113 flotations raised £10.1 billion. The 1998 total of money raised was the third lowest this decade.

Mr Austin said the new issue market virtually closed down at the end of July and there is no hint of an upturn on the horizon. He said a turnaround will come when investors start to take advantage of big disparities between valuations of small and large companies.

A weak new issue market will eventually damage enthusiasm for management buyouts, since many investors seek to make their "exit" via a flotation.

Figures yesterday from the Centre of Management Buy-Out Research (CMBOR) confirmed the recent slowdown in the MBO market. Although the total value of deals concluded in 1998 was a record at £13.4 billion, the final-quarter total was only £2.2 billion, a 40 per cent decline from the average of the previous three quarters.

Tom Lamb, managing director UK of Barclays Private Equity, said the number of deals worth less than £50 million was remaining relatively stable but "the private equity mega deal shopping spree is clearly over for the time being". Barclays Private Equity sponsors CMBOR's work.

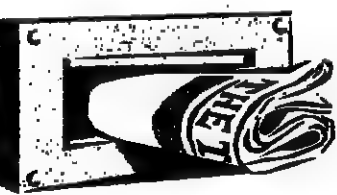
More MBOs and management buy-outs are going into receivership, in line with the weakening economy.

### TOURIST RATES

	Bank	Bank
	Buy	Sell
Australia \$	20.52	19.18
Austria S	13.52	13.12
Belgium F	2.72	2.54
Canada C	0.6780	0.6585
Denmark Kr.	13.52	12.43
Egypt £	5.94	5.33
Finland Mk	5.12	4.37
France F	16.52	15.12
Germany Dm	2.981	2.739
Greece Dr	429	460
Hong Kong \$	13.52	12.59
India Rupee	129	109
Indonesia Rp	1,8906	1,8906
Ireland P	1,1972	1,0962
Israel Sh	7.33	6.87
Italy Lit	2,095	2,128
Japan Yen	208.78	191.23
Malta £	0.567	0.508
Netherlands Gld	3.388	3.071
New Zealand \$	3.38	3.12
Norway Kr	13.44	12.50
Portugal Esc	201.54	278.48
S Africa R	10.54	9.98
Spain Ptas	284.20	282.41
Sweden Kr	14.40	13.50
Switzerland F	2.451	2.233
Turkey Lira	14,944	10,922
USA \$	1.785	1.646

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

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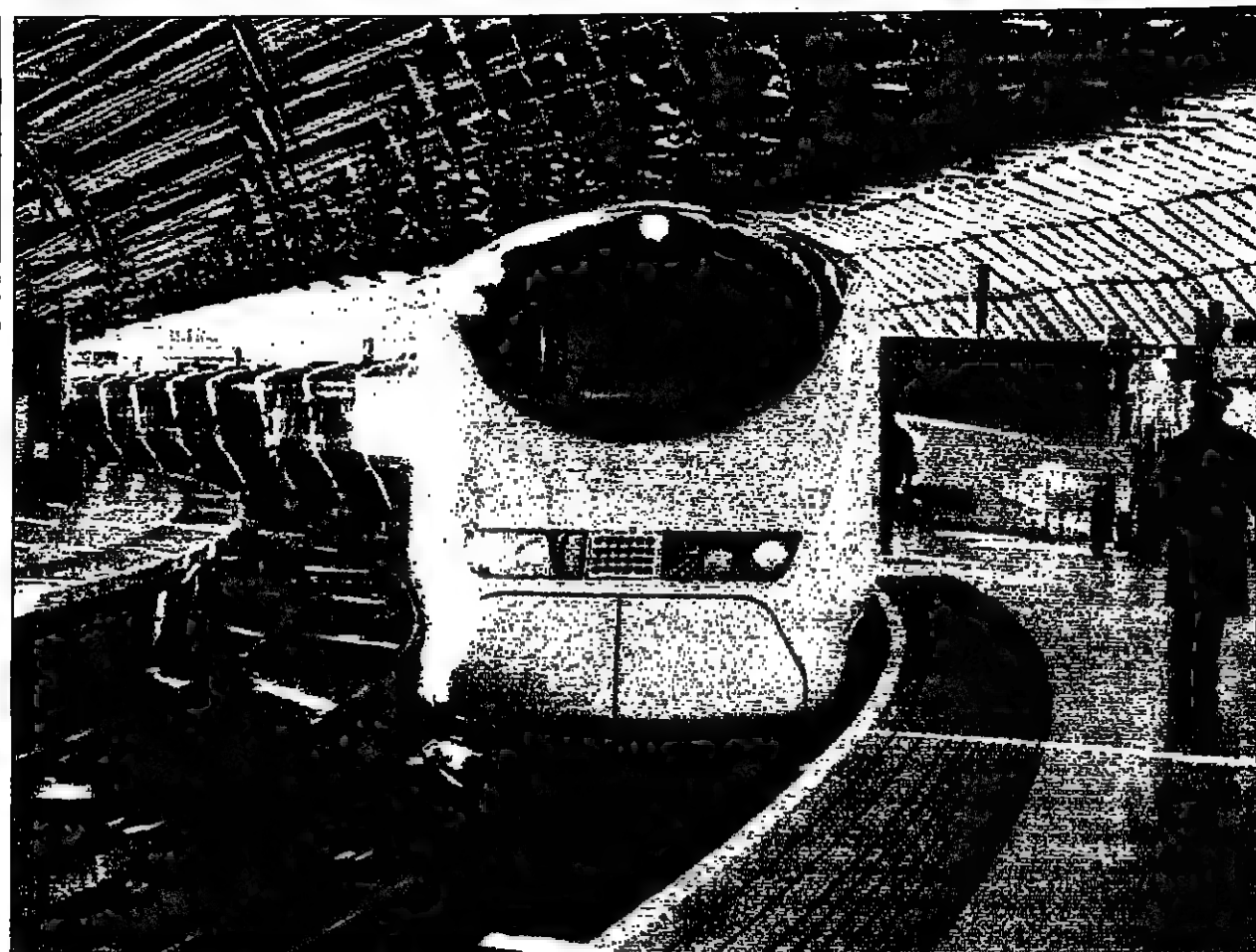
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CHANGING TIMES



LCR is to raise £2.65 billion of bonds in two or three tranches for the first section of the link, from the tunnel to Waterloo, above

## Channel rail link loan record

By OUR CITY STAFF

THE CONSORTIUM behind the Channel Tunnel rail link (CTRL) is poised to start raising funds for the project with the largest-ever sterling borrowing outside the gilt market.

An official announcement on the date and the size of the first tranche of funding, which will take the form of up to £1.65 billion of eurobonds

guaranteed by the Government, is expected early next month. Warburg Dillon Read, the investment bank, has been appointed joint lead manager on the first tranche of bonds with HSBC Markets.

London & Continental Railways (LCR), which is building the much-delayed 68-mile rail link, plans to raise up to £2.65 billion of bonds in either two or three tranches to finance the first section of the

link, between the Channel Tunnel and the existing line to Waterloo.

Up to £1.1 billion will be raised at a later stage to finance section two, which will complete the link from north Kent to London St Pancras.

The bonds will be fully and unconditionally guaranteed by the Government as part of a revised public-private partnership plan unveiled in June. The original plan collapsed

last January after John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, rejected a plan by LCR for an extra £12 billion of public money.

Section one will be financed by £1 billion of bonds due by 2010, and up to £1.65 billion of bonds due 2028. The longer-dated tranche may be further subdivided to include up to £650 million of bonds due 2038, if market conditions permit.

## AT&T to hit job cuts target early

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN NEW YORK

AT&T, the US telecom provider, expects to reach its goal of cutting 18,000 jobs a full year ahead of schedule.

When it announced the cuts in January, it said that it expected to take two years to eliminate the 18,000 jobs. But with an unexpectedly high number of managers accepting the early retirement package, it now foresees hitting its target by the end of this year.

The company, which has forged an alliance with British Telecom, has cut 16,000 jobs so far and expects the final wave of early retirements to trim another 2,000, bringing the total workforce to 108,000.

It attributed the higher than expected rate of early retire-

ments to the booming stock market, plentiful job opportunities and a strong retirement incentive package, which included higher pensions and expanded eligibility for benefits.

AT&T had expected to save \$700 million this year as a result of workforce reductions. It has not made a new savings estimate but said that job cuts in addition to the planned 18,000 may occur in 1999.

Burke Stinson, company spokesman, said: "We will continue to trim jobs in areas that are not growing for AT&T — traditional voice and administrative work — and we will continue to add jobs in the businesses that prove to be high-growth for us."

## Wetherspoon to add 80 pubs

By DOMINIC WALSH

JD WETHERSPOON, the pub operator, is to spend £100 million opening 80 pubs in 1999 — about 10 per cent more than his previous forecasts.

The openings will create 2,000 full-time and part-time jobs. Rivals such as Bass and Whitbread have scaled back ambitious expansion programmes in response to the weaker economic outlook.

City doubts over Wetherspoon's prospects, plus effects of the World Cup and poor weather on summer trading, have hit its shares. Yesterday they closed up off at 175p, against 341p in March.

However, Tim Martin, chairman, said that like-for-like sales had recovered strong-

ly since summer, adding: "The economic climate probably helps a company like ours with a perception of value for money and exposes fashionable pubs that were never going to last that long."

The new pubs, a third of which will be in London and the South East, will range in size from a 2,500 sq ft former post office near Manchester to a 10,000 sq ft former garage in Plymouth costing £2.5 million the chain's biggest pub.

Wetherspoon has 306 pubs and almost 8,000 staff. Mr Martin said that, despite loss of revenue during the World Cup from a ban on television sets, he had no intention of reviewing the policy.

## Kuwait woos foreign oil investors

By SAIED SHAH

FOREIGN oil companies will invest up to \$7 billion (£4.2 billion) to develop Kuwait's northern fields, which border Iraq, over the next five years to double production there.

Sheikh Nasser al-Sabah, Kuwait's Oil Minister, said the country had held talks with British and American oil companies and was confident of co-operation agreements to

take production from these northern fields to more than 900,000 barrels a day.

So far Kuwait has limited foreign participation to technical assistance. The minister emphasised that foreign ownership of its natural resources will remain banned by the Kuwaiti constitution. Under the new arrangement, foreign companies will be paid a service fee for development and production but they will have

to buy the oil. The minister said that at a later stage, oilfields in central and western Kuwait will also be offered to foreign companies.

Tony Mills, an analyst at Wood Mackenzie, the energy consultancy, said that although Kuwait faces a large budget deficit because of the low price of oil, the offer of the northern fields was strategically motivated. He said: "It's a human shield approach. They

want British and American companies sitting between them and Iraq."

Separately, Kuwait announced a series of measures to reform its heavily subsidised economy, to cope with the oil slump.

Saudi Arabia, which is also known to be considering allowing foreign companies to invest in its oil and gas sector, yesterday unveiled an austerity budget for 1999.

## Oskar's snub

A FRANCO-GERMAN row has blown up on the eve of tomorrow's Ecofin meeting in Brussels, where EU finance ministers or their representatives will sit down to thrash out the exchange rates between their respective currencies and the euro. This highly important event is even being televised for the benefit of the populations of the 11 participating countries.

Expect balloons, speeches and a general air of a financial Eurovision Song Contest, therefore. Do not expect Oskar Lafontaine, the German Finance Minister, who would arguably be the most important participant. He has refused to return from a family holiday for the event.

The French, who are taking it all terribly seriously, are fit to be tied, particularly Dominique Strauss-Kahn, Oskar's French counterpart.

Our own Gordon Brown is this week on holiday with his mum in Scotland, and the Treasury will probably confirm today that he, too, will not be there. But as we are not participating in the euro, his absence is hardly the snub, deliberate or otherwise, being served up on the French by Red Oskar.

STROLLING around a surprisingly busy City yesterday lunchtime, I realised that someone has badly miscalculated the number of people in work. The shops are all open for the first day of their sales, but about two thirds of the sandwich bars have not bothered. As a result, the queues were enormous, and at least one branch of the normally reliable Pret à Manger chain was about to run out — at a



quarter past one. It seems to me to be a wonder. At least 30,000 people are in over the next weekend to prepare for the euro. I know the Broadgate branch of Cornes & Barrow is open on New Year's Day, for the first time in 228 years. But what on earth is everybody else going to eat?

## Drinks top-ups

THE remuneration committee at Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries, the bidder for fellow brewer Marston, Thompson & Evershed, has made a shocking discovery. The directors are underpaid, both by comparison with similar-sized brewers and pub operators and with local companies in the West Midlands.

A detailed survey found that the W&DB board was paid on average two thirds of their highest-paid equivalents elsewhere. The committee put new bonus targets in place. So the pay of David Thompson, W&DB's outspoken managing director, is up 26 per cent to £240,000, the annual accounts show, and total boardroom remuneration is 30 per cent higher, although much of this is because previous years' bonuses were waived as directors felt the results then had been disappointing.

But, I put it to Thompson, isn't the

trouble with such reviews that they can only ratchet up salaries as everyone keeps up with a moving average? "The issue must to a certain extent be denominated by what you have to pay to recruit," he says. So pay for some senior managers has been rising. Have you had trouble recruiting directors, then? "No."

## Overdrawn

A BLACK mark to the Treasury, which like the rest of the civil service was still on holiday yesterday, although, to be fair, they were at least in contact with the outside world. I am told it was a Privilege Day, as if secure jobs and inflation-linked pensions weren't privileges enough. This means they all get an extra day at Christmas. Even the Treasury, although you would have thought with the euro just days away there was enough for them to do.

MARTIN WALLER

## Hong Kong reports 7.1% fall in economy

HONG KONG'S economy shrank by a record 7.1 per cent in the third quarter of 1998 from a year earlier, hurt by slack consumer demand, falling exports and a drop in investment spending. Economists said Hong Kong's economy would continue to decline in the fourth quarter and into 1999, but at a slower rate. This was because of comparisons with recession-weakened year-ago periods as well as interest rate cuts and a more stable property market, they said. The Government revised its estimate for the fall in first-quarter GDP year-on-year to 2.6 per cent from 2.7 per cent, and the second-quarter fall to 5.1 per cent from 5.2 per cent. A marked downturn in exports of goods depressed overall economic performance in the third quarter, it said.

Total exports declined by 7 per cent in real terms in the third quarter against a year earlier, a marked drop from the decrease of 0.5 per cent in the second quarter. Imports fell even more sharply, by 10.5 per cent in the third quarter, due to the setback in domestic demand and a further decline in re-exports, the Government said. This followed a 1.8 per cent decline in the second quarter.

## Conoco to cut costs

CONOCO, the US energy company based in Houston, yesterday said that it was taking action to cut costs and reduce capital spending in response to low oil prices. America's eighth-largest energy company will take a \$50 million charge in the fourth quarter, cut 1999 capital spending by 21 per cent and shed almost 1,000 jobs. The company is controlled by DuPont, the chemicals company, which sold a 30 per cent stake in October in America's largest initial public offering.

## Eskmuir's £9m buy

ESKMUIR PROPERTIES is to pay £9.2 million for four fully let freehold office buildings at Randsalls Park, Leatherhead, Surrey. The vendor is Langbourn Property Investment Services, part of Sun Life of Canada, on behalf of in-house clients. Total rental income is £799,020 a year, or £12.85 a square foot. The net initial yield is 8.3 per cent and the running yield is expected to rise to more than 9 per cent in 2002, Eskmuir said. The purchase is its fourth since flotation in May. The company said that the market continues to offer good opportunities.

## Halliburton cuts jobs

HALLIBURTON, the US oil-services company with extensive North Sea interests, gave warning that profits would fall short of expectations and said another 2,750 job losses were planned. The company blamed low crude oil prices, saying it expected earnings per share of between 14 cents and 16 cents, compared with forecasts of 36 cents. There will be a fourth-quarter charge of \$35 million (£20.8 million) against job cuts. The losses are in addition to 8,100 redundancies arising from the acquisition of Dresser Industries, the rival oil services company, in September.

## US home sales rise

SALES of US existing homes rose to a near record in November and were on pace to exceed last year's levels, because of a strong economy and low mortgage rates, a real estate group said yesterday. The National Association of Realtors said that home resales rose by 2.7 per cent in November to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.90 million units, falling just short of the record 4.91 million rate set last July. NAR expects housing sales to hit 4.78 million for 1998, which would break last year's record of 4.22 million resales.

## Centrica raises £92m

CENTRICA, the energy company that was part of the former British Gas, has raised £92 million through a sale to Bankers Trust and leaseback of two gas platform topsides located in the South Morecambe field. The leases are for 20 years and will be accounted for as finance leases, Centrica said. The transactions will not affect Centrica's licence interests or its operation of the South Morecambe field, it said. It is estimated that, at the pre-tax profit level, 1999 financing costs on the amount raised will be reduced by 2.7 per cent compared to existing facilities.

## Galaxy Media rising

SHARES in Galaxy Media rose 16p to 78p after the company confirmed that it was considering bidding for the television rights to the cricket World Cup. The statement followed weekend press reports tipping the company as a potential bidder for the rights to the cricket World Cup in 2003 and 2007. Any bid would be made through Sports News Group (SNG), an independent business controlled by Graham Gutteridge, Galaxy's chief executive. Galaxy has an option to buy SNG for up to £2.8 million, which is open until June 30.

## Laird buys in Munich

LAIRD GROUP, a vehicle engineering company, has bought Bavaria Elektronik, a provider of electromagnetic interference shielding products based near Munich, for DM16.8 million (£6 million) in cash. Bavaria's turnover is expected to be DM21.0 million in the current year. It will become part of Laird's APM subsidiary, which was acquired in 1996, and will strengthen its position in Europe. Laird's share price drifted 1p lower yesterday to 150p, having been as high as 478p in the first half. Pre-tax profits fell 41 per cent in the first half to £20.5 million.

## Goodhead sells stake

GOODHEAD GROUP, the printing group based in Oxfordshire, has sold its 29.25 per cent stake in WHY publications to Daily Mail Investment Trust for £2.39 million. Goodhead has also agreed to dispose of its holding of 940,790 preference shares in WHY at their issue price of £1 per share. WHY publishes advertising-only magazines that circulate in the Midlands. The net book value of Goodhead's holding of WHY ordinary and preference shares on May 31 was £1.03 million, which produced income of £180,000.



# The French become defensive



COMMENTARY  
by our City Editor

Even France is beginning to wake up to the uncomfortable business reality of European Union. You cannot join in and still keep everything under your own national control.

Legendary Paris diplomatic skills have ensured that Frenchmen run the IMF, the European Bank and, after a brief Dutch hiatus, the European Central Bank. But the agreement of the British and German stock exchanges to join up, without Paris if necessary, was a shock.

Far worse for Gallic *glorie* is the fear that carefully groomed French national champions might be bypassed in the creation of Europe-wide defence businesses. France, after all, persuaded the British and German governments that the model for a new alliance should be Airbus Industrie. Airbus is a four-country consortium, but most key operations are in France, whose government via ownership of Aerospatiale, is the key shareholder.

Maybe that is why privately owned defence contractors in other EU countries argued that mergers with French state firms were not on. The security implications of inevitable French control made it easier to convince other governments that their grand industrial strategy was a business and political nightmare.

French governments of either hue prepared for Europe-wide rationalisation by refusing any foreign takeovers and forcing their

own defence businesses to merge into powerful blocs. The former chairman of Thomson-CSF fell in the process, after he planned a merger with GEC's Marconi.

Thomson and the enlarged Aerospatiale are still junior to Europe's defence leaders, British Aerospace and Marconi. BAE is talking separately to Germany's smaller DASA. GEC is two-timing Thomson with BAE, Lockheed and Northrop Grumman. Swedish, Italian and Spanish firms are players too. Rolls-Royce's future is integral.

Denis Ranque, new chairman of Thomson, is trying to square this circle. He claims to have persuaded the French Government to curtail its stake in Thomson below 10 per cent as a condition of a merger agreement it approves.

Using this condition as leverage, Thomson is trying to make a 50-50 merger, when Marconi is bigger and better in defence. GEC shareholders will surely prefer an American takeover to giving Thomson more than 40 per cent of a joint company.

If a European grouping is going to be run for profit on Anglo-Saxon lines, without manipulation by big shareholders, BAE and Marconi must get together

first. The Airbus consortium was a start-up, to which each member made its own contribution. While European defence rationalisation must be couched in language of merger, there is no reason to expect defence mergers to be any more equal than others. For the most part, the question is who will take over whom at what price. French negotiators understand that. British boards need to see the light before it goes out.

## Consumers' friend has the last word

Stephen Lintch is going out with the old year from his job as electricity regulator. The main reason, reorganisation aside, is that he believes what he says. To put it more kindly to his detractors, he is a politician, and "independent" regulators need to be both.

The Professor, as he is known

to fans and detractors alike, believes in the power of competition so much that he thinks it worthwhile to create competitive conditions artificially, in the manner of Dolly the sheep, where nature did not intend them.

In the model that the Professor sold to the Thatcher Government, the State, in the form of price regulation, really will withdraw. You have only to create a competitive market and then to trust the working of market forces to protect consumers as reliably in utilities as in other markets where there is choice.

Even in its own terms, the argument is never quite perfect. However, even if you reject, there is always some residual monopoly, in wires, pylons, pipelines or storage, where rates of return and prices are still set by the state regulator. And the process of introducing, widening and protecting competition always seems to require ever greater interference by politi-

cians in the very businesses that they seek to stop regulating. The Professor's worst problem, however, was that governments do not believe in competition. They all say they do. They may even think they do. When market forces close coalmines, freeze out nuclear power or preclude environmental levies, their political priorities soon change. New Labour decided to help the mines by banning new gas-fired power stations. To promote competition, the Professor would just have to blackmail National Power and PowerGen to sell coal-fired stations to other generators.

Now that he no longer has to worry about politicians, Professor Lintch has used his last report to insist on the folly of such a policy for consumers. To protect consumers via market forces, he says, we should encourage new entrants to build as many power stations as possible of whatever kind make most financial sense. That is certainly the logic. But

competition through the power pool has not tended to slash profits to the bone. The pool is being abolished, but it will be no surprise if market forces still operate as if competitors were colluding. The Professor did his best to fulfil his brief. His successor will find out if it was the right one.

## While the traders are away...

Stock market investors in London will have had only one complete day of trading between the day before Christmas Eve and the Monday following New Year's Day. With half days today and on Christmas Eve, the total trading time across 12 days was raised to two full sessions.

The calendar has conspired with demands coming from the introducers of the euro to restrict the amount of trading. But was it wise to allow such long periods of closure? The inability to trade is inconvenient enough of itself, but it may have — or indeed may be — causing price irregularities. If any euro or other shocks arise, the market may exaggerate difficulties that could have been

defused more gently if trading was open for longer.

It is fair to ask whether extended closure in London was even justified. Sterling is not joining the euro and, in any case, the US share markets are probably more important to UK investors than the Continent.

An example of the distortion caused by the closure comes with the BP/Amoco merger. It is expected to be completed today or tomorrow, when London is closed but New York, where BP ADRs are widely traded, is open. The ramifications mean that the FTSE index-makers have reserved the right to substitute their own share price for the purposes of index calculation if the ADR inferred price is deemed "unreliable". This is a nonsense that could have been avoided.

## Fantasy shares

PERSPECTIVE is in short supply on Wall Street too. A report claiming that US pre-Christmas on-line retail sales were up 230 per cent from 1997 sent any share linked to the Internet soaring. America On-line, which is planning to merge with Netscape, has multiplied sixfold this year giving it a market value bigger than Walt Disney. For a company that does not rate in the profit stakes, that is a lot to ask. Investors no doubt take courage by remembering that even Disney was once a Mickey Mouse outfit.



Service ended: from left, Nick Irens, Haim Tegelaars and Steven Palmer of Vardon at the Chelsea Harbour Club

# Vardon pulls out of Harbour Club venture

By Dominic Walsh

VARDON, the health and fitness club operator, has terminated its joint venture with Peter Beckwith, the property multi-millionaire, under which the upmarket Harbour Club brand would have been rolled out across Europe.

Under the terms of the 50/50 agreement, the two sides were to have invested £60 million over four years, of which Vardon's share would have been £15 million. However, it has now been unwound "by mutual agreement" with Vardon owning the exclusive rights to the Harbour Club name in Europe.

Vardon, which last week unveiled the sale of its attractions division for £47 million to a management buyout, signed the joint venture in

August. It formed part of the £26 million acquisition of the original Harbour Club in London's Chelsea Harbour from Mr Beckwith and Francisco Soler, its founder.

Nick Irens, Vardon chairman, said the projects put forward by Mr Beckwith were more ambitious than originally planned and would have been earnings dilutive. "The cost of the developments he was looking to do was spiralling into the realms of £10 million to £12 million and we felt uncomfortable with that," he said. "We see an opportunity to develop existing tennis clubs at a cost of £5 million to £6 million."

For the next two to three years continental development of the Harbour Club

concept will focus solely on The Netherlands. The first will be in Eindhoven, where Vardon has just signed heads of agreement to acquire an existing tennis club that will be redeveloped over 12 months. It is also in talks to acquire two existing clubs in The Hague.

The unwinding of the joint venture allows Mr Beckwith, father of "It Girl" Tamara, to retain ownership of the new Milan Harbour Club as well as development sites in Brussels, Hamburg and Düsseldorf. Although the Milan club will keep its name, any new developments undertaken by Mr Beckwith will no longer be able to use the Harbour Club tag.

In the UK, Vardon is step-

ping up the development of its Cannons brand. In the first quarter of 1999 it will open new clubs in Leicester, Liverpool and Barrow-in-Furness and sites in Plymouth, Swindon and Northampton are expected to open at the end of the year or early in 2000. The average cost of the clubs is between £25 million to £35 million.

Mr Irens said that Vardon, which will shortly change its name to Cannons Group to reflect its new focus on health and fitness, continued to seek one-off acquisitions. However, it had ruled out any of the quoted operators. "That would mean paying a premium, which we don't believe would be in the interest of our shareholders."

# Schwab overtakes Merrill

FROM OLIVER AUGUST  
IN NEW YORK

CHARLES SCHWAB, the US online brokerage that bought Sharelink, has overtaken Merrill Lynch in terms of market value.

The rise of Schwab marks the first time that an Internet company has outgrown its traditional competitors.

The recent surge in Internet stocks pushed up Schwab to \$26 billion (£15.5 billion) in market capitalisation, compared with Merrill's \$25 billion. Merrill is one of the top US investment banks and the biggest US brokerage. It employs thou-

sands of people around the world and is the second-biggest adviser on mergers and acquisitions on Wall Street.

Schwab started out as a discount brokerage in the 1970s and offers amateur investors the ability to trade directly over the Internet without an intermediary. The company was founded by Charles Schwab, who still owns a 13 per cent stake, now worth \$3.5 billion. Since October, the company's value has tripled.

Schwab is the undisputed leader in the online trading business and the rebound in the stock market has lured many amateur investors back into the market. Inter-

net trading has grown 30 per cent in the fourth quarter. Schwab trades on an earnings multiple of 82.

The company holds \$450 billion in assets and has 5.4 million customers. Some of them are Wall Street veterans who have retired to their living rooms to become armchair traders. They access research reports over the Internet and then buy or sell stocks with their million dollar savings.

Merrill had long been dismissive of Internet brokerage but the success of Schwab has forced the company to back-track. The first Merrill trading website will be launched in the new year.

## TV cricket deal lifts TTC price

AS NEWS of England's unexpected Test victory over Australia swept through the City, cricket fever lifted shares in The Television Corporation (TTC) 15p to 235p yesterday when the company confirmed a new deal on the sport with Channel 4 (Martin Barrow writes).

TTC, one of Britain's growing band of independent television production companies, is to produce all domestic cricket coverage for Channel 4, which has broken the BBC's 62-year monopoly of cricket on terrestrial television.

Sunset + Vine, a TTC subsidiary, will produce all Nat West Trophy matches and Test coverage from next summer, starting with the visit of the New Zealand team.

Its presentation is to be led by Mark Nicholas and Richie Benaud.

## Zetters dividend cut after profits suffer 27% slump

By Dominic Walsh

ZETTERS, the pools and bingo operator, has cut the interim dividend after a 27 per cent decline in pre-tax profits to £766,000 in the half year to September 30.

Reporting a drop in earnings per share to 7.2p (10p), the company trimmed the payout from 5.5p to 4p. Paul Zetter, chairman, said the cut was "considered prudent in order to increase funding for a policy of promotion and expansion".

Its struggling sport-the-ball joint venture made a profit of just £11,000 (£193,000), while its pools operation declined from £289,000 to £250,000. Bingo, after increased promotional spend, made a slightly reduced contribution of £514,000.

Zetters, whose pools arm has never recovered from the launch of the National Lottery,

is part of a lobby group in discussions with the Government over the industry's future. "It is clear that both deregulation and a significant reduction of pools betting duty are necessary to preserve the pools industry," said Mr Zetter.

For more than a year, the group has been seeking a strategic solution to its problems, but talks with potential bidders, including Littlewoods, have come to nothing. However, a spokesman said that separate discussions with possible buyers for each of its two main businesses were continuing and it was hopeful of making an announcement in the new year.

Shares in the group, 40 per cent of which are controlled by the Zetter family, closed 9p lower at 118p, valuing the group at just £8.2 million.

## Gawler in Sketchley hot seat

By Fraser Nelson

SKETCHLEY took on its fourth leader in six years as David Gawler, its finance director, agreed to become chief executive of the former dry-cleaning to Supasnap company.

Mr Gawler, who organised the disposal of Sketchley's high street sites to rival Mister Minit, has been acting chief executive since July and has now decided to combine the roles. John Jackson, his predecessor, left when the disposal was completed in July.

Sketchley now has two legs: a workwear rental and cleaning division and a business that maintains telegraph poles and cables. Mr Gawler has no plans to split the company, and one of his first tasks will be to change its name.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

# Brokers look to play safe with tips for year ahead

AS 1998 draws to a close, the usual crop of new year share tips is being offered to City investors by the various broking houses. Last week Credit Suisse First Boston issued its five favourites for the new year, including Diageo, up 24½p to 845½p, 3i Group, 4p better at 584p, and British Aerospace, ½p firmer at 518p.

Now it is the turn of NatWest Stockbrokers, which has issued 12 tips for 1999, having ditched ten of its recommendations for 1998.

All the tips are constituents of the top 100 companies. The two companies retaining their positions are British Aerospace and Unilever, 9½p dearer at 676½p, while newcomers featured include BP, down 8p to 908½p, Allied Zurich, up 25p to 908p, British Telecom, up 4p to 906½p, Glaxo Wellcome, 7½p better at £20.73, Imperial Tobacco, 7½p firmer at 647½p, and Ladbrokes, 5½p higher at 238½p.

The remainder making up the list are Lloyds TSB, up 13p to 878p, P&O Delfer, 9p better at 712p, PowerGen, 3½p dearer at 791½p, and Thames Water, 6p harder at £11.66.

Among the losers are Smith-Kline Beecham, 23½p higher at 842p, HSBC, 9p off at £16.39, Shell, 7½p firmer at 373p, and Cable & Wireless, 9½p better at 746½p.

"Our preferred stocks are drawn from the pool of companies benefiting from earnings clarity, strong balance sheets and robust cash flows," says Jeremy Baxton, head of research at NatWest.

Share prices generally finished the last full working day of 1999 on a firm note, but failed to hold their best levels. The FTSE 100 index soared more than 100 points in early trading — coming to within 30 points of the 6,000 level — anticipating a firm start to proceedings on Wall Street.

In the event the index finished 74.3 points up at 5,941.5, with the best gains seen among the leaders. A meagre 286 million shares changed hands with the FTSE 250 index 30.7 up at 4,843.5.

Trading conditions were weak with rises among blue chips masking stock shortages, high levels of absenteeism among traders and investors, and futures-related activity.

GEC continued to attract speculative support with the price finishing 8½p higher at



Pierre Bonelli, chief executive, saw shares of Sema plunge after a series of rogue trades. Sema ended up 2p at 591p

549½p. Word circulating in the Square Mile suggests the defence electronics giant has whittled down the number of potential suitors to four. They are said to include British Aerospace, Thomson-CSF of France and the two US companies Lockheed Martin and Grumman Northrop.

GEC also features among nine leading British blue chips

to be included in five new European indices being formed to coincide with the introduction of the single currency. Others on the list include Lloyds TSB, BP, BT, Prudential Corporation, up 10p at 918p, Marks & Spencer, 5½p dearer at 413p, Diageo, 3½p better at 705p, and Royal & Sun Alliance, 14p higher at 500p.

Sema Group plunged to

touch 451p before rallying to finish 2p up on the day at 591p after a series of rogue trades went through on the ticker. A fine of 4,321 shares did the damage having gone through at the 451p level. That compares with the two previous trades executed at 485p and 550p. It shows the sort of volatility that investors are being forced to endure, especially among leading companies.

LucasVarley formed 4p to 202p after buying back a total of 2.25 million of its own shares at almost 200p each. Cazenove, the company's own broker, did the business.

Hayes continued to benefit from a series of recent meetings with brokers, adding 23p to 506p, while GKN climbed 42p to 814p as some pundits took the view that 1999 will be a better year for manufacturers as the pound loses ground.

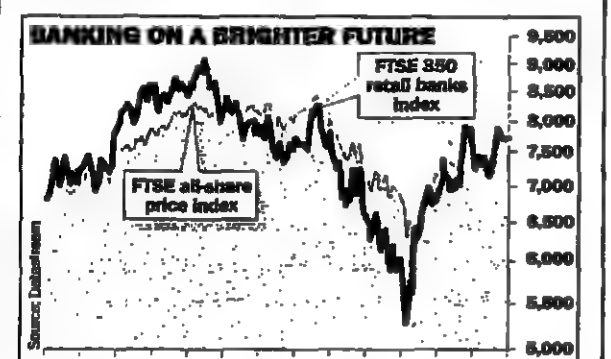
One of the biggest falls was seen in Trafficmaster, down 21p to 532½p. A report suggests the group's newly developed car anti-theft device was potentially dangerous.

As England's cricketing heroes were wiping the smile off Australian faces, shares of The Television Corporation climbed 15p to 235p. It has been awarded the contract to produce Channel 4's test and county cricket programming from the 1999 season.

Galaxy Media, up 15p to 76½p, is also getting in on the act by bidding for the cricket World Cup television rights. Word is the group may take up its option to buy Sports News Group and use it as a springboard to make a £100 million offer to the International Cricket Council to control television coverage.

GLI-EDGED: Bond prices were squeezed higher in traditional year-end trading. But they were unable to hold their best levels of the day. In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt finished 25p dearer at £118.67. Turnover was again low with just 8,000 contracts completed. Among conventional issues, Treasury 8 per cent 2021 put on 5p to £150.37, while among shorter-dated issues, Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was 10p firmer at £107.55.

NEW YORK: Blue chip shares recovered in late morning trading, spurred on by a strong consumer confidence report. At midday the Dow Jones industrial average was up 61.27 points to 9,288.02.



BANKING shares were marked higher, encouraged by the prospect of increased home loan business next year if rates drop to 6 per cent.

Abbey National rose 24p to £12.99, NatWest Bank, 23p to £11.94, Halifax 12½p to 862½p, and Standard Chartered 10p to 694p.

Some investors are also looking forward to some unfinished business being concluded on the corporate front. Surely Barclays, up 34p to £13.33, has its days as an independent numbered?

Either way, a revival in bid speculation is on the cards. However, Richard Coleman, at Merrill Lynch, is not getting excited about a revival in mortgage business. "It will be a tough year for the lenders whatever happens. A cut in the rate is not going to make much difference, conditions remain volatile," he says.

He reckons the trading outlook for banks generally remains good, providing the economy slows down gradually and does not suffer a hard landing.

## Bad bunch not helped by dangerous months

MARK TWAIN could have been writing about 1998 when he observed, with his usual cynical wisdom, that October is one of the "peculiarly dangerous months to speculate in stocks. Other dangerous months," he continued, "are July, January, September, April, November, May, March, June, December, August and February".

August and September of this last year were especially tricky. That was when the largest chunks were lopped off share prices in a mad summer of volatility. But investors' feelings of precariousness pervaded throughout the 12 months.

That 1998 was a nerve-racking year for investors is beyond doubt, but the leading indices look like they will end the year a good deal stronger than where they started.

The FTSE is up 14 per cent, the FTSE all share index is 12 per cent to the good and in the US the S&P 500 index is an incredible 26 per cent ahead. Even investors in Japan, where the Nikkei Dow was down 9 per cent in actual terms, washed their faces with help from currency translation effects.

It is galling, therefore, to report that all the shares selected by Tempus this last year as investment tips have lost ground. The performance is particularly disappointing since the Tempus outline predictions of the macroeconomic environment were commendably accurate.

Inflation was weaker than Tempus forecast but the column was right to suggest that before rates would rise in 1998 before falling later in the year. To below 6.75 per cent (Base rates climbed from 7.25 per cent to 7.5 per cent and stand at 6.5 per cent now).

Tempus was also right to foresee that sterling would weaken. (At the start of the

THINGS CAN ONLY GET BETTER				
	Value at Jan 1 1998	Value now	Actual change	Change relative to FTSE All Share
Tempus	682p	485½p	-30%	-38%
Next	652p	485½p	-25.8%	-38%
Dea	851p	881p	+3.5%	-15%
Tempus Group	161½p	154p	-5%	-14%
FTSE All Share	601p	687p	+14%	-

year I bought DM2.96 and has fallen to about DM2.81.)

In other words — weasel words admittedly — the logic behind the selections was only let down by the selections themselves.

None of the six Tempus new year tips for 1998 ended the year in the black and all underperformed the benchmark FTSE all-share index. Laporte, the chemicals concern headed by Jim Leng, was the worst of the bad bunch. All quoted chemicals companies fell deeply out of favour, but it is small comfort that Laporte down 30 per cent on the year, did slightly better than the sector average, which was down 35 per cent.

Next, the fashion retailer, fell 28 per cent or 206½p over the 12 months. A March profits warning, when Next owned up to stock mistakes — did the damage and the shares never really recovered. Next also struggled against a general weakening of consumer expenditure. Shares among quoted shopkeepers declined 8 per cent on average.

Billiton, the South African mining concern, that floated on the London market in July 1997, fell 22 per cent or 34p in 1998. Starting the year at 156p the shares were already well below the float price of £20p but they stand at £22p today. Doubts about falling metal prices shook the share and further weakness came be-

cause of a big stock overhang for much of the year. A plus point, however, is that Billiton closed yesterday significantly up on its 99p low for the year.

Base was one of a large number of companies — big and small — that fell victim to a slowdown in consumer expenditure. The wet summer and the slow trading that accompanied the World Cup led to a profits warning. A product recall on the brewing side knocked sentiment further.

Tempus showed some schizophrenic tendencies by anticipating Asian troubles while at the same time suggesting investors get some exposure to the possibility of recovery. Some schizophrenia is necessary in selecting shares — to use kinder semantics, the strategy is called hedging. But Tempus did not profit from its recommendation of Foreign & Colonial Pacific Investment Trust.

The best that can be said of F&C Pacific is that the share fell a good deal less than many might think, after the horror stories that have emanated from that part of the world. It lost only 7 per cent.

The best performer of the Tempus tips was Beazer, the housebuilder. The reasoning for picking Beazer was impeccable. Falling interest rates should have stimulated demand for houses. Beazer, with scant exposure in London, and the South East should have been insulated from the fall in land prices, which was concentrated there. In common with other housebuilders, Beazer shares also looked cheap, and having been hammered hard in 1997 they should have been due for a bounce.

Unfortunately no end of shoulds count for anything in the share race game. Beazer ended 1998 down 5 per cent.

Not discouraged by its bad year, and blessed with the benefit of experience, Tempus will publish tips for 1999 on Saturday.

Brian Gilbertson, chief executive of Billiton, at its flotation

### COMMODITIES

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00

### LIFE OPTIONS

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00

### LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00

### MONEY RATES (%)

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00

### EUROPEAN MONEY DEPOSITS (%)

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00

### DOLLAR RATES

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00

### OTHER CURRENCIES

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00

### STERLING SPOT AND FORWARD RATES

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00

### FTSE VOLUMES

LIFE			
Dec 1998	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jan 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Feb 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Mar 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Apr 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
May 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jun 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Jul 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Aug 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sep 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Oct 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Nov 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00
Dec 1999	100.00	100.00	100.00



# Time for Gordon to divorce prudence

John Grieve Smith says that there is a clear need for expansionary measures in the Budget

As the danger of a serious industrial recession intensifies, the need for expansionary measures in next year's Budget becomes increasingly probable. The pre-Budget report, and subsequent discussion of it, now have a strange air of unreality; although in a rapidly changing situation it would have been premature to take any final decisions on the Budget five months ahead.

The Chancellor was, of course, quite right not to trim his expenditure plans. It would be perverse to worsen the recession by raising taxes or cutting expenditure in order to keep down public borrowing. The need is to maintain or increase demand, not to reduce it. The Treasury should be ready to take measures such as temporary tax concessions to stimulate business investment or consumer spending, or speed up public investment projects.

Gordon Brown's presentational problem is that by his emphasis on "fiscal prudence", he has put himself in an embarrassingly inappropriate stance when the threat of a serious recession calls for an expansionary budgetary policy. The Government may feel that it has had enough marital difficulties already, but it really is time Gordon divorced prudence — or at least they should have a temporary separation.

The uncertain business outlook is already prompting companies to hold back on starting new investment projects. The latest CBI and BCC surveys show investment intentions down at the levels of the last recession, and (contrary to the Treasury's forecast) a fall in business investment next year seems highly probable. If conditions deteriorate, merely reducing interest rates will only have a limited effect in countering the fall in demand. In so far as reductions in interest rates lower the exchange rate, this would certainly help. However, business investment and consumer spending are not likely to be stimulated to any great extent by cutting interest rates, and in time of recession, banks are

likely to be more cautious when it comes to lending to business. Given that monetary policy alone is unlikely to be sufficient to maintain demand, the Chancellor will need to increase public expenditure or cut taxes to do so.

The belief that the recession can be countered merely by cutting interest rates is even more unrealistic for the EMU countries where rates are already relatively low. However, they face the additional difficulty that the so-called "growth and stability pact" originating from the last German Government, limits their ability to run budget deficits, unless they are in serious recession. Hopefully the new Franco-German axis will amend this.

The Chancellor has made things difficult for himself by proclaiming the "Golden Rule" that revenue and current (as opposed to capital) expenditure should balance over "the business cycle". There is no neat, regular cycle: the pluses and minuses do not necessarily cancel out.

Moreover, it is always dangerous to proclaim rigid rules of this kind when future developments can never be accurately foreseen. The Maastricht budgetary conditions should have rammed this lesson home.

What, then, would be the most appropriate measures to stimulate demand? As far as public expenditure is concerned, additional public

investment is the natural candidate. There are many essential projects to be done and increasing investment expenditure in a recession does not necessarily imply any commitment to a continuing stream of projects at this level: whereas any increase in current expenditure on, say, health or education is difficult to reverse when the recession comes to an end. Expenditure on benefits comes somewhere in between, in that it would, for example, be possible to give pensioners, say, a one-off bonus to boost purchasing power, but generally speaking, any increase in benefits is unlikely to be reversible.

In regarding public investment as a prime candidate, however, it

is important to be realistic about the timing of such projects. It can take at least two years to evolve, approve, design and place contracts for an investment project. Making any speedy impact on demand, depends on giving the go-ahead to projects that are ready, or nearly ready, for implementation. It is therefore essential that the Chancellor should alert departments and local authorities to the possibility of early starts if the recession deepens, and to encourage them to press ahead with preparing possible projects well in advance.

The other route open to the Chancellor to stimulate demand is by temporary tax concessions, particularly measures that would stimulate business investment. For example, more generous depreciation provisions. In the past, such concessions have had a marked effect when known to be available

for only a limited time. Concessions to boost consumer demand could, in principle, take the form of either cuts in indirect taxes, such as VAT, or direct taxes, such as income tax. Cuts in indirect taxes have the advantage that they can be made at any time in the tax-year, but the disadvantage is that reversing the cuts when the economy picks up will stimulate price increases at just the wrong moment. Income tax adjustments are easier to reverse, particularly the widths of bands at different tax rates, because people are used to annual changes. One other possible instrument is to vary social insurance contributions temporarily — a measure envisaged as long ago as the 1944 White Paper on Employment Policy.

These are the kind of measures the Chancellor should be considering in drawing up his Budget. The business community and all those whose jobs are at stake desperately need reassurance that the Government is not going to sit idly by and let events run their course, but will adjust their fiscal policy to meet changing conditions.

## Lairds fear effects of first move by Scottish land reformers

Fraser Nelson explains the background to proposals that could lead to radical change

Three years ago a German artist called Martin Maruma was looking for a piece of real estate to share with his girlfriend. They fancied something a bit different and got in touch with Fahad Vladi, an Iranian land agent who had a few contacts. They were not disappointed. "For the price of a shabby London studio flat," he promised, "I can get you a beautiful island you wouldn't believe."

This is the "Highland problem", and it dates back centuries. Since the Clearances, Scotland has been divided into astonishingly large chunks that can be freely bought and sold and left to degenerate into a depopulated wilderness.

Good lairds have invested, and kept some economic life alive. But the roll call of bad lairds is long and continually updated. Herr Maruma succeeded in buying the island of Eigg, complete with 66 islands, for £1.6 million, only to pull out after having failed to deliver a penny of the £15 million investment that he promised.

This summer Stephen Hinchliffe bought the nearby Knoydart Peninsula while he was still being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office after the collapse of his Facia shoe retail empire. He lost Knoydart before being arrested over the separate problems at Facia.

The list goes on, but what can be done? Next week the Scottish Office will lay its solutions on the table, blueprints to what is being billed as the biggest shake-up in land ownership laws since the Middle Ages.

Everyone from the lowliest crofter to the highest-ranking aristocrat is agreed that Herr Maruma and Mr Hinchliffe have been perfect examples of unpopular landlords: but would it take a revolution or a few well-aimed reforms to keep the bad lairds away?

The feelings of Brian Wilson, Labour's Trade Minister, are well known. When Eigg's islands collected £1.5 million to buy the island for themselves last year he told them they had "lit a candle" that would light the flame of freedom all over Scotland.

"Private landownership has never been the solution to the Highland problem," he told them. "It has been the source of the Highland problem for far, far too long."

Scottish landowners become distinctly unnerved when they hear words like this coming from high-ranking government ministers. To them, this sounds like a "property is their" mantra, suggesting that



Margaret Paterson was among the people of Eigg who celebrated after buying their independence when they paid £1.5 million for the island last year

a purge of private landowners will be the first duty of the Scottish parliament.

Happily for them, Mr Wilson does not have a seat on the Land Reform Policy Group, which has been hammering out a blueprint since October last year. It is chaired by Lord Sewel, Scottish Minister for Agriculture; his conclusions will be published on Tuesday and offered to the Scottish parliament when it convenes in July.

The blueprint is expected to be a new Land Fund to help communities like the Eigg Islanders to finance buyouts. There has also been talk of a compulsory right to buy, so a community could wrest land from the laird wherever they get the cash together. Already, the lairds scent a nasty political odour that could change their way of life for ever.

Take, for example, Lord Robert Mercer Nairne. His ancestors have owned and managed a 3,700-acre Perthshire estate since the year 1162. He is quick to distance himself from the notorious lairds, and makes no secret of the money that his estate generates: an £84,000 profit this year from sales of £1.04 million.

But he believes that Lord Sewel could accidentally poison the work done by good landowners in the hope of killing off a few nasty weeds.

"The LRPG is proposing to redesign communities by bureaucratic edict," he said. "This is the sort of thing which, quite rightly, appalled us about the Communist and Fascist states. I cannot believe the LRPG mean these things, but the road to Hell is paved

POSITION	NAME	ACRES
1.	Duke of Buccleuch & Queensberry	261,800
2.	Duke of Atholl	148,000
3.	Captain A.A.G. Farquharson of Fyvie	120,000
4.	Earl of Sutherland	101,000
5.	Duke of Westminster	95,000
6.	Crown Estate Commissioners	94,000
7.	Courtesy of Sutherland	83,000
8.	Viscount Sowerby	76,000
9.	Sir Donald Cameron of Lochailort	76,000
10.	Duke of Roxburgh	65,000
11.	Baroness de Winton	62,200
12.	Duke of Argyll	60,000
13.	John A. Macdonald of Galloway	56,000
14.	Earl of Caithness	56,000
15.	The Queen	55,270
16.	Marquess of Bute	53,990
17.	Sir John Gifford of Luss	53,000
18.	Lord Bute	49,000
19.	Earl of Dalhousie	47,290
20.	Lady Ann Biddiscombe	45,000

with good intentions. There is undoubtedly a real problem in Scotland when estates which include communities can be bought and sold and run without the communities themselves having any direct involvement. It is a problem, I think which has coloured a lot of the LRPG's thinking."

The Scottish Landowners' Federation, which represents 80 per cent of lairds, is certainly worried, and has hired a lobbying consultancy. But even the Scottish National Party, which prides itself as the most vociferous campaigner for land reform, says it has no interest in the scalp of Lord Mercer Nairne or any of the 20 aristocrats who control 1.7 million acres of 19-million acre Scotland.

"Good landowners will

have nothing to fear from land reform," said Rob Gibson, an SNP national executive member who has been working on the subject for years. "Our concern is not who uses the land; it's how the land is used."

One of his pet hates is "subsidy junkies", and the name Mohamed Al Fayed brings a frown to his face. The laird of Harrods owns two Highland estates, and has applied for £2.2 million of subsidy to plant trees on barren hills.

He had been popular with the local crofters after buying football strips for the entire school (easy task: there were 12 of them), but they now fear that the new trees will soak up streams that feed the river, keeping away salmon and the high-paying Americans who pay to fish for it. Then there is

the case of Terry Wogan, who decided to plant hundreds of thousands of trees bordering what are now Mr Al Fayed's estates, benefiting from tax breaks and subsidies along the way.

Mr Gibson argues, quite simply, that rich folk don't need grants. "There are some people who shamelessly exploit the state subsidy system," he said. "I would arrange things so rich landowners do not receive subsidy unless they could show us how much money they make from their estates, and the balance of their offshore bank accounts. Then we'd decide."

So will Lord Sewel take him up on this challenge? His group is considering levying a form of council tax on forestry and sporting estates; something that would have hit the likes of Terry Wogan quite hard and raise £4 million a year.

But landowners have semi-threatened to stop investment if their tax breaks are removed. They can expect to be let off the hook next week, if the LRPG sticks to its September assessment on the reforms: "not yet: needs more study".

In fact, the worst fate that will befall landowners is being fully identified. Amazingly, there is no easily accessible record of who owns Scottish estates; it is often said that they are Britain's answer to Swiss bank accounts.

Landowners themselves turn to Who Owns Scotland. Andy Wightman, an expert in land registration, set out to answer the unresolved question in this 1996 book, but managed to account for only 69.7 per cent of

the country after being blanked by 110 landowners.

On Tuesday Lord Sewel is expected to recommend a computerised collation of all available information in the hope of finding out who owns the 30.3 per cent of Scotland that is apparently unaccounted for.

Even the Scottish Landowners' Federation supports this. Andrew Dingwall-Fordyce, its convener, said: "I would very much like to see a good register of land ownership; quite often we don't have information about our own members. It is wrong that landowners should hide behind family trusts."

Ideally, their identities would be made public before a bid closed. Mr Hinchliffe is understood to have heard about Knoydart through a chum on the board of Sheffield United; Herr Maruma learned of Eigg through Fahad Vladi.

The policy group is likely to demand that all land sales are publicly advertised for at least a month before offers close. If the community would like to bid — using advice and cash provided by the Land Fund — the offer period would be extended for another month and it could be given first refusal.

If the pace of political change in Scotland continues, these reforms could be law by the autumn. But this is a system of evolution; existing lairds should have little to fear from agreeing to a voluntary code of conduct and having their names published. On Tuesday the target will be the likes of Herr Maruma and Mr Hinchliffe. From next Christmas, they may have to settle for that shabby London studio flat.

## Birth of more sophisticated European bond market

Richard Miles on investment banking and the single currency

You might expect Kevin Moore, head of foreign exchange trading at Barclays Capital, to be at the forefront of the euro conversion, but you would be wrong. Mr Moore, pictured, will be almost 6,000 miles away when the first financial transaction in euros is conducted on New Year's Day.

"The first quote in euros will probably take place in Tokyo," he says, "because it is the only major market open on the day. Our first real chance to trade in the new currency won't come until January 4. Markets are likely to be confused for the first few days, anyway."

But the advent of the euro has brought considerable change to the foreign exchange desk at Barclays Capital and other investment banks. Many houses have pared the number of dealers in expectation of lower volumes when the wholesale trade of 11 currencies becomes the wholesale trade of just one.

From next month, money passing via the banking system between companies in the 11 participating countries will be in euros. A German company will still be able to transact in marks on its home turf but the inter-European flows will almost certainly be in the common currency.

"As far as international trade goes, such as sterling against the US dollar, volumes will be unaffected, but inter-European flows of money are going to decrease dramatically," says Mr Moore. "Our business is doing quite well this year, but next year we expect to see some decrease in money flows."

The fixed-income departments of investment banks have suffered worse cutbacks ahead of the convergence of the 11 sovereign debt markets. Seeking higher returns from Italian state bonds as opposed to the safety of German government debt will, in theory at least, disappear. But while in-

terest rates may be much the same, the risks will not. Bonds will still be judged on the creditworthiness of the issuer.

Mr Moore believes that convergence will lead to greater depth in the European bond market, which in turn should produce greater sophistication. Take the high-yield market, known in some circles as junk bonds. In the US, the market is worth some hundreds of billions of dollars, while in Europe it is still very much a fledgling business.

"The euro debt market has the potential to rival the US. If you look at the US market, it is highly developed and, depending on the success of the euro, a similar type of debt market could evolve on this side of the Atlantic."

On a more symbolic note, Mr Moore points out that the euro will oust sterling to become one of the top three reserve currencies along with the US dollar and the yen.

Mr Moore expects a great deal of speculation in the currency markets from January 4, with the euro as the target. Sterling could be the natural vehicle for such speculative flows, although neither the British Government nor exporters will appreciate a stronger pound. "Sterling will find its own level eventually, perhaps at the equivalent of 2.60 and 2.70 against the mark," he suggests.

Plenty of intervention by the European Central Bank could also be on the cards if the euro starts sliding against other currencies under the onslaught of the speculators. "There will be a lot of intervention... to ensure a steady exchange rate between the euro and US dollar."

Not that — expressing a purely personal view — Mr Moore sees any long-term prospects in euro trades, since he is convinced that monetary union will collapse, maybe even before the UK enters. "It is a political ambition, rather than an economic issue."



The Euro and me

### Notice to Borrowers

The Portman Building Society announces changes to its standard variable mortgage interest rate for new and existing borrowers with effect from and including 2 January 1999, as follows:

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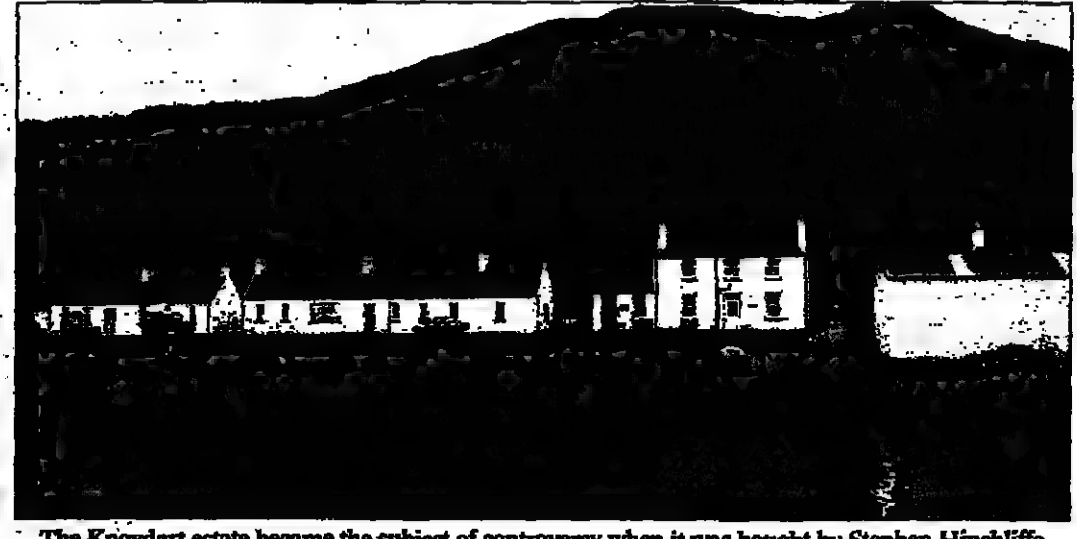
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Al Fayed: wants £2.2 million of subsidy



The Knoydart estate became the subject of controversy when it was bought by Stephen Hinchliffe



Wogan: benefited from tax breaks



THE TIMES WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 30 1998

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## Equities fail to hold best levels

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous days close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

# Equities fail to hold best levels

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103	102	ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES			103	102	BANKS			103	102	BREWERIES, PUBS & REST			103	102	DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS			103	102	ELECTRONIC & ELECT		
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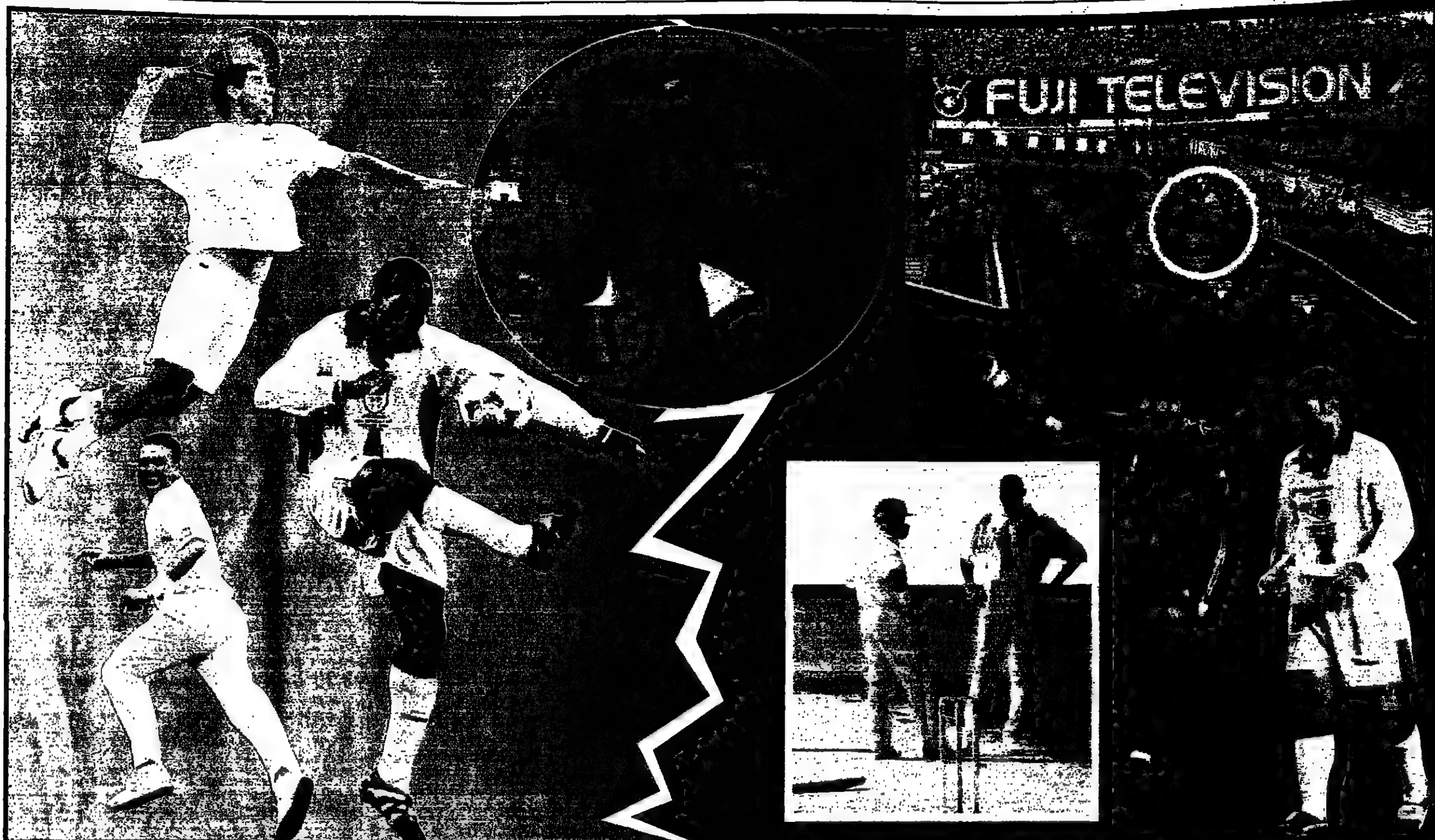












One of the most famous images in Egyptian art is the jackal-headed god, Anubis, weighing a soul against a feather. I would like to close this sporting year by bringing you the Anubis Theory of Sport.

What is the most satisfying experience in sport? Winning, we say at once, but even as we speak the word, our lips stumble over it. Because it is not quite true. Almost — but not quite.

As we look back over the sporting year, we find that the best moments were not necessarily those of victory. Rather, they were of combat at the very highest level.

In most sporting encounters, from the grandest of grand finals to the most ordinary of quotidian encounters, one person, or one team, loses because he or she or they failed just a little. One plays well, the other plays less well. And it is all interesting enough: after all, it is the daily bread of sport.

But there are other, higher, rarer times. Times when neither opponent falls, when both play at their best. At these moments, both are playing the game as well as it has ever been played, as well as the game can be played.

Normally, one side gains a dominance over the other. But on these rare occasions, one side forces the other to play better and, having

## Year of the jackal goes from sublime to the ridiculous

**'The fact that England lost is scarcely relevant'**

done so, plays better in response. And on and on, spiralling upwards to a scarcely breathable altitude of excellence, a dizzying, head-spinning, vertiginous experience of all the best things that sport has to offer.

And it is here that the jackal-headed god comes into play. For on these high and lonely occasions, the difference between victor and loser is no more than a feather. At such extraordinary levels of achievement, the scale of decision with the thump of lead weight.

There were three occasions in the past year when sporting combat reached this high pitch of perfection: three times in which the outcome was decided by the weight of a feather.

The first of these, was, of course, the England-Argentina match. The exchange of dodgy penalties was fol-

lowed by an exchange of brilliant goals, but that wasn't the best bit. What followed, after the sending-off, was a passage of sustained brilliance: Argentina attack, English defence.

It was a piece of true sporting beauty and the fact that England lost the penalty competition is scarcely relevant at all. The truth was in the combat. The result mattered bugily and yet it hardly mattered at all. In such perfect moments, the winner loses something, the loser gains something.

The match would have been as perfect, as memorable, had the result gone the other way. The purity of the combat at this high level takes us beyond earthbound cares about mere result.

The second example of the Anubis Effect was at Wimbledon. It was another defeat, too, and again the defeat hardly matters. Tim Henman played Pete Sampras in the semi-finals, the first time a Briton had reached such a level since 1973. The match reached a peak and sustained it through sets two and

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

his own most potent gift, a kind of moral authority. And it was — just — enough.

Sampras is not given to big displays of emotion on court, especially in the middle of the match. But when he won the third set — he did so by the weight of a feather — he punched the air and leapt above the scuffed green grass. He knew that the scale had irrevocably tipped his way.

The third example is the joust between Allan Donald and Michael Atherton in that tumultuous Test match at Trent Bridge. Donald, the best fast bowler in the world, was bowling at his best and his fastest. Atherton was combating him with nerve, calm, a small smile and just a smidgen of luck.

It was a titanic joust and this time the feather fell for the Englishman. It led the way to victory in the match and ultimately the series, which was all very fine and significant and important. But what actually mattered was the joust itself. The sight of two great players playing at their very best, the moment

when the feather was poised, the balance level and no one to know which way it would fall.

The best of sport is made of such moments, when sport takes on a high and noble bearing beyond its usual capacity. But it does so because sport is precariously balanced on the edge of farce. The fragile framework of sport — the play-

ing of children's games for appallingly high emotional and financial stakes — is always like to keel over into abject nonsense at any moment. The weight of a feather will take sport in an instant from beauty to belly-laugh.

Three of these ab-

ject moments stand out in the year's sport. The first was the sight of Michael Schumacher stalling at the lights in the showdown grand prix, the last race of the year. All set for the most amazing moment in history and — whoopee. That hand, sheepishly raised above the cockpit,

still cannot fail to provoke incredulous mirth.

The second was the Sabina Park Test match between England and West Indies, which was abandoned after 56 minutes, 10.1 overs and eight direct hits on the batsmen. It was highly dangerous and utterly ludicrous.

The final example is England in the penalty shoot-out against Argentina. They were hopeless. I mean, can you imagine Franz Beckenbauer saying: "Well, you can't simulate the pressure of a penalty shoot-out, so let's not even try. Let's leave it all down to dumb luck." It was as if P. Mingis decided not to practise diving off the 30 metres board, because no amount of practice could simulate the pressure of doing so in the Olympic Games.

Poor Batty. Never even taken a penalty before. Missed. So "sport" took us in a few minutes from the pinnacle of beauty to the abyss of bathos. That was not about England. It was about all of sport. It takes you to the loftiest peaks and then dumps you, not in despair, but in belly-laughing hilarity. And the difference is no more than the weight of a feather.

**'Poor Batty. Never taken a penalty before'**

TOMORROW

The single numbers of 1998

### HOCKEY

## No happy ending for Storry

BETH STORRY produced an outstanding performance in goal for the South but it was still not enough to prevent her team from losing 1-0 to the holders, Midlands. In the opening match of the under-21 regional tournament at Milton Keynes yesterday (Cathy Harris writes).

As the Clifton No 2, Storry spends most weekends deputising for Claire Burr in the premier division, but she demonstrated her obvious potential against the champions, who failed to find a way past her at 15 first-half penalty corners, and eight in the second.

The result was sealed by the Midlands captain and dependable defender, Sally Wright, who finished off a good move down the right when she scored a superb goal from the edge of the circle in the fifteenth minute.

Wright, along with Storry and Joanne Duff, from the North, were among several players who must have impressed the England Under-21 management watching from the sidelines.

A goal in each half by Charlotte Fisher, of the North, a strong candidate to make the England Under-21 indoor squad, helped her team to a comfortable, if flattering, 4-1 victory over the West in the second game. Duff, the North's influential midfielder and captain, made it 3-0 from a penalty corner a minute later and Joanne Bradburn squeezed in a low reverse-stick shot before the West replied with a consolation goal through Marianne Hood three minutes from time.

### Richard Hobson on the club that survived a brush with extinction to face Aston Villa

## Joyce optimistic after journey to Hull and back

Warren Joyce was optimistic to drift into coaching or management, but not this soon or into such a parlous situation. If anybody has inherited a harder task than the one he undertook in succeeding Mark Hateley at Hull City last month, it is hard to remember when.

Then, as now, Hull sat isolated at the bottom of the Nationwide League third division and while their existence is no longer in immediate peril, their future in the Football League clearly is. Well might Joyce describe the FA Cup third-round tie away to Aston Villa on Saturday as a distraction. The sides are first and 92nd in the English pyramid, top and bottom of the senior ladder. Contrasts are stark and many, but one comparison in particular testifies to the gulf between the elite and the impoverished. Villa paid £5.75 million for Dion Dublin, a sum that would have rescued Hull three times over when they stood recently on the brink of closure.

Joyce, whose first reaction was to laugh at the draw, is happier speaking of similarities. He talks of "good habits" that pertain as much to Gareth Southgate as to his own Gareth Williams. It is a prosaic but sensible outlook, nurtured during five years as a part-time

coach at Old Trafford. He undertook the job while playing for Burnley, spending two evenings each week training the under-16s and running the side on Sunday mornings. He had dipped his toe into coaching as an unpaid assistant to his father, the youth coach with Burny, and decided that the experience at a bigger club would improve his prospects of staying in the game.

Among those passing through his command were Wes Brown, Alex Notman and Danny Higginbotham, all of whom have graduated to the United first team. "Materially it was a

world away from Hull City, but there were certain things I learnt that I can put into practice here," Joyce, 33, said. "Even though the kids had super facilities, the best coaching and preparation, it was instilled in them that if they want to be successful then they must work hard. I tell the team here that if they work their socks off they should be all right."

He was already familiar with the lower divisions, having played almost 600 games in midfield or defence with Bolton Wanderers, Preston North End, Plymouth Argyle and Burnley when he joined Hull 2½ years ago. Last season he won the player-of-the-year award, but



Few managers can have inherited as difficult a task as Joyce

the final position of 22nd was the worst in their history as ructions developed between key figures.

Supporters felt increasingly unhappy with David Lloyd, the chairman and Great Britain Davis Cup tennis captain, who had taken over the club in July 1997. Hateley was unhappy at a lack of money to spend on players. In early October, the criticism became too much for Lloyd to bear. Angry, too, that his wish to sell the decaying Boothferry Park and move to a new ground had been thwarted, he pulled out,

threatening to leave the club to fend for itself.

A five-man consortium headed by Tom Belton, a farmer and one-time chairman of Scunthorpe United, dispelled fears of liquidation by stepping in with what appeared to be days, perhaps hours, to spare. By now, Joyce effectively worked as assistant to Hateley. When Hateley was dismissed, Joyce expected that his own departure would follow swiftly. Instead, Belton placed him in temporary charge and then con-

**'We are still in a huge mess but we are all in it together'**

firmed the appointment. Pictures of Hateley still adorn the manager's office. Joyce says that he has been too busy to take them down.

"I thought that as I was playing there was no harm in being the manager as well," Joyce said. "Besides, it might be the only manager's job I ever get offered. I honestly do not know how close the club came to folding. David Lloyd [who still owns the ground] had all the power so he could do what he liked. It was a scary time."

"Now, the atmosphere is quite buoyant considering our position. We are probably as stable as we have been for a while. We are in a huge mess, but we are all in it together — the players, the chairman and the supporters. We are paddling in the same direction."

He describes the support as "different class". More than 6,000 travelled for a 2-0 Coca-Cola Cup defeat against Newcastle United last season and the last of the 5,900 allocation for Villa Park was sold within an hour. He has also been allowed to bring in new players, including Justin Whittle, a defender from Stoke City, for £50,000.

"I want people to enjoy Saturday as a day out," Joyce said. "They have deserved it and they should take it for what it is. If this game brings a bit of publicity for Hull and some money for the club, then great. But I don't want anybody to forget our priority lies elsewhere. The table will not allow it."

### BOWLS

## Ward gets there in the end

DOREEN WARD, 74, the grandmother from Paulton-le-Fyde who swept into the second round-robin stage on Monday, upset the odds again when she qualified for the quarter-finals of the Boddingtons Newton Hall International Classic at Blackpool yesterday (David Rhys Jones writes).

Ward, who has undergone two hip replacement operations in the past three years, beat Caroline McAllister, the world indoor singles champion from Lochwinnoch, 21-18 in her third game of the day. She then had to wait until officials had consulted the rule-book and reached for the calculator because she was involved in a tie with McAllister and Sue Kearsley, the local hope, who had each won one game.

"Agnes [McAllister] was through, having won all her games, but the other three in group B had all won one each, so we had to fall back on shots countback," David Beauchamp, the tournament director, said. "Trouble was, they were all on plus three shots. It's usual to favour the player who wins the game between the tied players and they had all beaten each other. We sat the three players down and they opted to go for the player who had won the most ends." Ward had won 31 compared with McAllister's 24 and Kearsley's 21.

The day's biggest shock was the failure of Jean Baker, the England Commonwealth Games singles representative in Kuala Lumpur, to win a game in her group, from which Sandra McLeish and Katherine Hawes qualified.



## 11

**meg@**

Ward got there in the



# Inspired Headley and Gough punish tactical errors by world's premier batsman

## England lay claim to spoils of Waugh

FROM ALAN LEE  
CRICKET CORRESPONDENT  
IN MELBOURNE

MELBOURNE (fourth day of five): England beat Australia by 12 runs

THE greatest Test matches turn on the smallest and most curious of matters. England, who have tortured the souls of their followers with infuriating inconsistencies down the years, might have been denied one of their finest, most characterful victories yesterday but for two fateful decisions by Steve Waugh, a cricketer who makes very few mistakes.

England were completing four uninterrupted hours in the field, an unacceptable product of well-meaning yet poorly considered legislation, when the man officially rated the best batsman in the world conceded them to a little more by claiming the extra half-hour, aiming for victory with a day to spare. It was not an outlandish move, for Australia had crept within 14 runs of winning this fourth Test with three wickets standing. It was calculatingly done because England were exhausted and this was designed to drain their last reserves. Yet it had entirely the opposite effect.

Dean Headley, the improbable colossus of this wholly unlikely result, had been bowling unchanged for 100 minutes, but he roused himself to go on and immediately took the eighth wicket. It was then that Waugh, who had batted for seven hours in the game without being out, took his second, more questionable decision.

As Darren Gough pulled out his glowing cheeks and began a new over, Waugh took a single from the opening ball, exposing Stuart MacGill to the strike. Doubtless Waugh was keen to demonstrate that the 88 runs the pair had added for the ninth wicket in Australia's first innings was not a fluke. Gough suggested otherwise. His first ball to MacGill could scarcely have been improved upon. It was of yorker length, swinging late and wickedly and hit off stump. Suddenly, Glenn McGrath, one of the world's foremost rabbits, was entering and Gough knew that he had only to conjure another such ball to secure the spoils.

It took him only two attempts. McGrath, struck



Gough's appeal for leg-before against McGrath is answered in the affirmative by Harper, the umpire, and England's victory celebrations begin. Photograph: Clive Mason/Allsport.

full on the boot by another reverse-swinging yorker, was dispatched by Daryl Harper. Gough, shamelessly and theatrically, stood with fist raised and clenched, bellowing at the skies, while bedlam ensued.

Headley, who had begun the day as a brief and hapless nightwatchman and ended it with exactly his best Test bowling figures, had tears in his eyes as he was swamped by a group of team-mates, reinforced by an invasion of non-players and staff—also, appropriately, by David Lloyd, a coach who deserves to bow out next summer with people thinking rather more kindly of his contribution.

This was not the beginning of a new England, nor even the end of the old. These are things that have been said and heard before, always with hollow consequences. What this win achieved was a stay of execution in a series that had apparently offered only its dog days for consolation and an injection of such stimulants as self-esteem too often prohibited to them.

For much of the game, England had toyed with the business of winning. They should have made more runs in their first innings and they should have prevented Australia obtaining a lead. But early on what, remarkably, was only

the third playing day, England's second innings was all but derailed and Australia looked sure to proceed to a 3-0 margin that could almost routinely be increased in Sydney next week.

At 127 for five, England led by only 57 and their last two batsmen worthy of the name were together. Alec Stewart and Mark Ramprakash having departed to soft dismissals. It was all too possible to envisage them setting a target of fewer than 100 and being beaten without the need for tea.

When Nasser Hussain was out, upstaging Nicholson to cover after a half-century of grimacing resolve, another 51 had been added, a glimmer of hope on a murky horizon. The events that transformed England's position, however, were an innings of consequence from a man who has stood accused of making runs only when it hardly matters and a considerable came from someone who was thought by Australians to be incapable of making runs at all.

Gracie Hick, who would not have been here but for the fitness problems of Graeme Thorpe, has usurped John Crawley in the middle order and will retain the place after making 60 with some of the chirruping conviction that he routinely shows in county cricket. He was ninth out, to a devilish yorker from Damien Fleming, with England 151 ahead. The partnership of Angus Fraser and Alan Mullally did not promise to delay Australia long. Mullally, after all, had made five noughts in six innings, his only scoring shot in the series involuntary.

McGrath has spoken freely of targeting such players, of sweeping them aside. He attempted it now, but with an inflated and inappropriate show of machismo that finally, belatedly, earned him a public rebuke from the match referee. Mullally grinned back cheerfully as McGrath pouted and

Michael Slater tried to win the game in record time, as is his wont. Headley conceded 23 runs quickly and his third over would also have been his last if he had not produced a ball of minimal bounce to catch Slater so palpably in front that he walked before Steve Bucknor could adjudge him leg-before.

Mullally, summoned as first change, immediately had Mark Taylor caught at long leg, playing the type of distracted shot to which he referred disparagingly after the game, but Langer and Mark Waugh took the score to 103, the target down to 72. Langer's dismissal was the key, not only because he had begun to play confidently but also because it came through a spectacular, one-handed catch by Ramprakash at square leg. It was a catch to inspire dreams and banish fatigue, just what this down-trodden team required.

The brothers Waugh, though, looked in little trouble and at 130 for three it was only a matter of whether the contest would end before time and light ran out. "Everyone in the ground thought we had it won at that point," Taylor said.

Not Headley, though. This engaging Brummie has been the epitome of modern England cricket, capable of great heights and dire depths, but now he was on top of his bowling, his line disciplined and his length challenging. In rapid succession, Mark Waugh, Lehmann and Healy edged catches and Fleming was leg-before. Headley had taken four for four in 14 balls and Australia were 140 for seven.

For eight overs, spanning 40 minutes, Steve Waugh and Nicholson chipped away at the shortfall until it looked so manageable that they could hardly opt out of the available extra time. It mattered not a jot that England had been unfairly extended, to the point where Stewart removed the balls in a forlorn attempt to enforce a close.

But Waugh had got it wrong and, soon, he was to err again. Had he seen Australia's horse in would have been a worthy man of the match, once more the national hero for a day. Instead, he was left to mope with his self-recriminations while England noisily celebrated one of the most extraordinary of wins, even by their own hide standards.

## Sound of silence increases the delight in victory



Cowdrey: loved Melbourne

England can have gained few sweeter victories than that of yesterday in Melbourne. It cannot be helped that the Ashes are beyond recovery. This was a wonderful, heart-warming win, a triumph for Test cricket, still the purest form of the game, as well as for Alec Stewart and his side.

There remains nothing more pleasurable to England cricketers than the "sound" of a silent Australia dressing-room, especially when its occupants are as stunned as they must have been yesterday evening. There is still no rivalry, you see, that quite matches the oldest rivalry of all, which began on this very same Melbourne paddock 121 years ago, when Dave Gregory's Australia side played James Lillywhite's England side in the first of all Test matches.

Generally speaking, the Melbourne ground has been good to England, partly because the pitch gives their bowlers help they usually need, and also, perhaps, the Melbourne weather so often has an English flavour to it.

Ironical though it may seem, a Melbourne Test match is more likely to be played in what were once known

as typical English conditions, with the ball moving about in the air and off the seam, than a Test match on some of the heavily covered pitches in England today.

As fine a piece of medium-paced bowling as I ever saw in England or Australia, was by Alec Bedser at Melbourne in the second Test match of 1950-51.

The secretary of the Melbourne Cricket Club at the time was Vernon Ramford, who compared Bedser's bowling that day to S. F. Barnes's legendary five for 44 in the second Test match of 1911-12, a match in which Ramford himself had played. For ball after ball on the first morning in 1950-51, the great Neil Harvey was unable to lay a bat on the great Bedser.

As often as not, a target of 200 in the fourth innings on the MCG takes plenty of getting. In 1950-51, for example, England, needing only 179 to win, fell 28 runs short. John Warr, the Middlesex bowler, who was a member of that England touring party, had to leave the ground, unable any longer, to watch the agonising struggle.

Yesterday the drama was less protracted. Coasting to victory at one

### JOHN WOODCOCK



Ashes Commentary

moment, even taking victory for granted, Australia were suddenly swept away before sensing what was airt. Immunity from defeat, or the perception of it, can be a dangerous antidote.

So now, by a happy chance, the name of Headley appears on the pavilion honours boards both at Melbourne and Sydney, Dean for his

six for 60 for England in the swoop yesterday and George, his famous grandfather, for his 105 for West Indies against Australia in the Sydney Test match in 1930-31. And Melbourne has thrown up another rivalling game of cricket.

Sir Len Hutton used to say that he never liked playing cricket at Melbourne, basically because he thought of it as a football ground, which it is. Owing to that, maybe, he never got a Test hundred there. Colin Cowdrey, on the other hand, got three, and Jack Hobbs, five. Lord Cowdrey of Tonbridge liked the finish yesterday to a school house match, with all the wild excitement but none of the breathless hush.

Having seen the first three Test matches of this present series, and witnessed the decision to which England have been subjected by the Australian press and public, I know how much this victory will mean both to the England party and the singularity of the Ashes. David Lloyd will have enjoyed being able to say: "The Australians have a little bit of a history of folklore when they are under pressure in the fourth innings of a match." The indomitable Gough

found the two perfect balls with which to finish off the match and Hick is recognised at last, I hope, as the member of the side with the most to offer.

One of the most memorable of all England victories over Australia—at the Oval in 1902—came after the Ashes had been lost.

This, therefore, is also a day to remember and at which to rejoice, before the teams move on to Sydney, there to end the rubber.

It was at Sydney in 1987 that I felt genuinely pleased when Australia ended a long and seriously depressing run of defeats by beating Mike Gatting's side in the last match of a series they had already lost, a sentiment for which I was roundly rebuked, not least by the England captain.

Although we didn't know it at the time, that was the day when Australia, under Allan Border, became a force again. England, too, rose in their agony yesterday.

In doing so they gave us all a lovely new year filip and ensured that, when the last Test starts on Saturday, there will, after all, be much to play for.

## When will Australia ever learn?

BY PAT GIBSON

SO ENGLAND did not need all those fitness trainers and psychologists to show them the way to beat Australia after all. The winning formula was blindingly obvious to any student of recent Ashes history.

All they had to do was examine the records of the past three series to realise that their seemingly invincible adversaries are there for the taking once they have retained the Ashes and been asked to chase a victory target.

It was Ian Botham who first exposed Australia's Achilles' heel in those unforgettable back-to-back Tests at Headingley and Edgbaston in 1981. Each time they thought victory was a formality, but Botham made them pay for their arrogance. First his heroics with the bat set them to score 120 and they collapsed to 111 all out; then he took five for 12 as they were skittled out for 121 in pursuit of 151.

The problem seemed to have been resolved when Australia began their winning Ashes streak by successfully chasing most targets twice in their 4-0 triumph in England in 1989 and three times in successive Tests at home in 1990-91, but it resurfaced in England in 1993.

They went to the Oval for the sixth and final Test with a 4-0 lead in the series, only to be outplayed by England. They needed 391 to win and were bowled out for 229.

Two years later they arrived in Adelaide for the fourth Test with an unsailable 2-0 lead in the series and collapsed to 156 all out, chasing 263. Then, in 1997, they returned to the Oval with the Ashes again secured by a 3-1 lead, and, needing 124 to win, were bowled out for 104.

Now it has happened again to wipe those smug smiles off Australian faces. When will they ever learn?

### FULL FINAL SCOREBOARD FROM MELBOURNE

Australia won 11-0.

ENGLAND: First innings

M A Atherton c Healy b McGrath	0
(3min, 5 balls)	
*A J Stewart c Langer b McGrath	107
(21min, 160 balls, 16 runs)	
M A Langer c Langer b McGrath	0
(3min, 7 balls)	
N Hussain c Healy b Nicholson	19
(20min, 56 balls, 2 runs)	
M R Ramprakash	69
c McGrath b S R Waugh	69
(17min, 52 balls, 5 runs)	
G A Hick c Fleming b McGrath	39
(33min, 67 balls, 3 runs)	
T W K Hogg c Healy b S R Waugh	13
(11min, 5 balls)	
D W Headley c Taylor b McGrath	14
(20min, 49 balls)	
D Gough b McGrath	11
(21min, 14 balls, 2 runs)	
A R C Fraser not out	0
(11min, 2 balls)	
A D Mullally c Healy b McGrath	0
(20min, 49 balls)	
Extras (lb 7, w 1, nb 0)	14
Total (76 overs, 338mins)	270

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-0 (Stewart 3, 2-6 (Stewart 3), 3-66 (Stewart 4), 4-76 (Hick 3), 5-127 (Hick 4), 6-176 (Hick 3), 7-202 (Hick 4), 8-221 (Hick 4), 9-221 (Fraser 0).

BOWLING: McGrath 22-5-64-3, Ramprakash 19-2-61-4, S R Waugh 6-2-8-2.

Second innings

M A Atherton c Fleming	0
(3min, 5 balls)	
*A J Stewart c Slater b McGrath	52
(12min, 50 balls, 4 runs)	
M A Langer c Slater b McGrath	14
(67min, 45 balls, 1 run)	



Stewart: triumphant

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-5 (Stewart 3, 2-6 (Stewart 3), 3-66 (Stewart 4), 4-76 (Hick 3), 5-127 (Hick 4), 6-176 (Hick 3), 7-202 (Hick 4), 8-221 (Hick 4), 9-221 (Fraser 0).

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FALL OF WICKETS: 1-13 (Taylor 3, 2-26 (Taylor 3), 3-36 (Taylor 4), 4-127 (S R Waugh 2), 5-151 (S R Waugh 3), 6-223 (S R Waugh 5), 7-226 (S R Waugh 5), 8-226 (S R Waugh 7), 9-240 (S R Waugh 12).

BOWLING: Gough 28-7-86-6, Headley 25-3-86-2, McGrath 21-3-64-3, Ramprakash 2-0-0-0, Fraser 22-0-7-2.

Second innings

M A Atherton c Healy b McGrath	18
(20min, 56 balls, 2 runs)	
*A J Stewart c Langer b McGrath	107
(21min, 160 balls, 16 runs)	
M A Langer c Langer b McGrath	0
(3min, 7 balls)	
N Hussain c Healy b Nicholson	19
(20min, 56 balls, 2 runs)	
M R Ramprakash	69
c McGrath b S R Waugh	69
(17min, 52 balls, 5 runs)	
G A Hick c Fleming b McGrath	39
(33min, 67 balls, 3 runs)	
T W K Hogg c Healy b S R Waugh	13
(11min, 5 balls)	
D W Headley c Taylor b McGrath	14
(20min, 49 balls)	
D Gough b McGrath	11
(21min, 14 balls, 2 runs)	
A R C Fraser not out	0
(11min, 2 balls)	
A D Mullally c Healy b McGrath	0
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# Dicing with death on the road to Dakar

Mel Webb meets the men who are about to risk life and limb in the toughest motor-sport event of all

They insist they are not mad. From the way they talk, it is as though they are about to embark on nothing more than a pleasant motorcycle ride for a few days. You play along with them, talk to them, listen to them and, against your better judgment, you begin to be convinced. And then, in the space of no more than ten minutes, one of them reveals that he is seriously thinking of becoming a film stunt man and another confesses that when he is not riding his bike he loves nothing more than engaging in a spot of sky-diving. It is their undoing. You now know that your original instinct was right all along: they are, assuredly, insane, wonderfully gloriously loopy.

The spot of recreational motorcycling this group of men is about to undertake, this gentle meander through rose-tinted highways and byways, is nothing less than the ultimate sporting test for rider and machine. There is something faintly symbolic in the fact that they will begin their odyssey in Granada, in Spain, on New Year's Day because, after this, nothing they will encounter in the rest of their sporting year — their sporting lives, even — will measure up.

To spend a day in their company is to be in the midst of people who form a brotherhood so tightly knit that nothing will ever split them asunder, a mutually supportive group linked by the dice with death they are about to share. They are all competitors in the Dakar Rally, that most dangerous of all motor-sport events; and yes, for all that they might demur, they are totally, March-hare, mad.

The rally, involving as it does 5,000 miles of some of the toughest terrain to which humankind can voluntarily subject itself, has this year attracted the biggest British contingent in its 21-year history. Competitors have lost their lives in this event; broken limbs are almost commonplace.

It is dangerous, no matter how much they try to dismiss its manifold perils with devil-may-care smiles and in-house jokes. Scratch the surface of their ironman veneer, however, and it is clear that they know what they are going into.

The company from which the rally draws its dramatic personnel is the same as that which draws Richard Branson and his ilk to take to the skies suspended from a balloon full of hot air and induces others to climb mountains. Just as the air is infinite and great peaks awesome in their immensity, so the North African desert is huge and unforgiving and can wreak a terrible revenge on those who would challenge its vast, bleak, empty strength.

The logistics of the event are of a grand scale. It needs 150 organising personnel, and the job of providing for the safety and welfare of the 850 competitors, 130 television people and 100 journalists will call for 40 catering staff, 35 doctors to man field hospitals, and 22 aircraft. It is a huge undertaking — it is said that when the rally is in full flow it resembles an army going to war.

Of the one two-man Land Rover team and 14 riders based in this country — one is French but counts himself among the domestic contingent — two young men in particular will add piquancy to the UK entry. Between them, Darren Bidwell and Paul Gower have more than 25 years' service in the Army behind them, but in this enterprise they are self-confessed virgin soldiers.

Bidwell and Gower are both senior members of the Flying Gunners, the Royal Artillery motorcycle display team, and although they are career motorcyclists, nothing they have ever encountered will have prepared them for this. Gower, 30, from Penryn, in South London, is the one who is thinking of becoming a stunt man, but says he still has not made up his mind, largely because "I'm a bit of a chicken". One thinks not.

"It's the chance of a lifetime," he said. "I've watched the Dakar on television for years and wished I could be in it — if I wasn't in the job I'm in, the opportunity to do this would have never happened. I can't wait."

Neither, it would seem, can Bidwell, 25, who at least knows what it is like to operate in desert conditions — he had barely finished his basic training before he became one of the youngest British servicemen to serve in the Gulf War. "It's going to be tough, I know that, but no matter how hard it was, I wouldn't want to miss it," he said.

Supporting the two Army riders will be Staff Sergeant John Bangs, the mechanic, and the display team's commanding officer, Captain Dave Mackay, for whom this will be something of a swansong: he leaves the Army in June. He has raised the £50,000 to enter the team and emphasises that not a penny of it has come from the public purse. "We're even doing it in our Christmas leave, so we've got easy consciences," he said. The motorcycles that Gower, Bidwell and many other riders will be using are made by KTM, an Austrian firm that specialises in off-road bikes. Buying the huge, 600cc single-cylinder machines would be prohibitively expensive, so the team have followed the lead of



A member of the Dakar-bound British contingent puts his machine through its paces

a considerable number of their peers in taking a leasing package, an integral part of which is back-up by the manufacturers en route.

They are monsters, almost as tall as the diminutive Gower. Built-in tanks hold 44 litres of fuel and three litres of water in addition to the three litres riders carry on their backs — the desert can be blisteringly hot and dehydration is a constant enemy. Ungainly they may look, but they handle superbly, by all accounts, and are capable of anything up to 140mph.

Riders are guided by a combination of satellite-driven on-board global positioning systems and a road book that unrolls in concert with a scientifically calibrated trip-meter. "You can get lost, but if you use the equipment properly, you shouldn't," Eric Bueno, the skydiving Frenchman who lives in London and is the courtesy Briton in the event, said. He has ridden in one Dakar Rally before, when he crashed and did not finish, but he says the experience will serve him well.

His aim is the coming 17

days will be, like Gower, Bidwell and the others, to arrive in Dakar in one piece. The one question left hanging in the air is: Why? The answer can be just as baldly summed up in the words of Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb Everest, who when asked why he had done it, replied simply: "Because it is there."

Those who are about to join in battle with the mean and magnificent beauty of the African desert will identify with Hillary's sentiments: the men who conquer the deadly sands will be heroes indeed.



Bidwell gets in some last-minute practice at Longmoor training camp in Hampshire

## TELEVISION CHOICE

## Horror to make you laugh

Buffy the Vampire Slayer  
BBC2, 8.00pm

The American schoolgirl chosen to hunt down vampires first appeared in the cinema, an exercise in comedy-horror that proved disappointingly short on both laughs and scares. Transferred to television the formula has proved more successful, at least in the United States. Now British audiences can judge. Our heroine (played by Sarah Michelle Gellar of *Scream 2*) arrives at a new school, determined to put her vampire-killing past behind her. Some chance. On her very first day a boy's dead body falls out of a locker, blood drained from holes in his neck. Soon afterwards young Buffy finds herself in nasty company in that favourite site of vampire attacks, a graveyard. The British actor Anthony Head, best remembered for the Gold Blend commercials, plays Buffy's mentor in an easygoing show that should keep nobody awake at night.

Babes in the Wood  
ITV, 10.00pm

The flat-sharing comedy resurfaces for a seasonal one-off. *Babes in the Wood* has promised more than it has delivered, hyped as something out of the sitcom run and turning out to be utterly mainstream and conventional. The enjoyment comes from having expectations confirmed, not confounded. The joke is that while the babes (played by Samantha Janus, Denise Van Outen and Natalie Walker) are chronically unlucky with men, their neighbour Charlie (Karl Howman) often finds himself the target of unwanted female attention. So it is tonight, as the women prepare for a New Year's Eve party but have no partners to share it with and Charlie is accused by an old flame of fathering her baby. Lines such as "I'm not really a French maid, I'm from Worthing" typify the show.

A Rather English Marriage  
BBC2, 10.15pm

The dramatic treat of the festive season is this poignant study of two elderly widowers, adapted from Angela Lambert's novel by the ubiquitous Andrew Davies and beautifully acted by Albert Finney and Tom Courtenay. Reggie (Finney) is a bluff former squadron leader still fighting the Battle of Britain. Roy (Courtenay) a humble former



Sarah Michelle Gellar, Nicholas Brendon in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (BBC2, 8pm)

milkmilkman who had a less glamorous war. They meet at the hospital on the day their wives die and despite glaring differences in class and temperament form a sort of platonically marriage, with Roy as the loyal but not entirely subservient wife/parent keeper. This unlikely but successful arrangement is threatened when the squadron leader meets a glamorous boutique owner (Joanna Lumley) and hurries towards marriage, unaware that she may only want his money.

The South Bank Show: Warren Beatty  
ITV, 11.00pm

It is the classic South Bank Show formula, an interview with the subject based extensively around his latest film but also surfacing his earlier career, illustrated with clips and conducted with impeccable courtesy by Melvyn Bragg. The reason that it works with Warren Beatty better than some is that Beatty has made more interesting films than most Hollywood actors and, a rare thing, has talked articulately about them. For more than 20 years, starting with *Bonnie and Clyde*, he has been his own producer, and sometimes he has directed as well. So like or hate his films, they are very much his own. This applies no less to his latest, *Batman*. Like several before it, it is a savage critique of American society, it's a scathing indictment of the political process delivered with Beatty's trademark mix of satire and farce. Peter Waymark

## RADIO CHOICE

Evening Concert  
Classic FM, 9.00pm

They're an ingenious lot, those bedroom planners on radio who have to assemble a musical jigsaw. First, they pick a theme. It could be the weather, or spooks, or villains and heroes, or that reliable old standby, animals. Then they find the music that, with a bit of pushing and shoving, fits into the chosen theme. And, hey presto, they've got a programme. Tonight's *Evening Concert* is archetypal. All the terms are more or less, what we hear when husbands and wives, to quote Classic FM, "make beautiful music together". Think of Joan Sutherland and her spouse the conductor Richard Bonynghe flashes up on the mind's screen. Think of the soprano Angela George and up pops Roberto Alagna. And so on...

## RADIO 1 (BBC)

7.00am Chris Moyles 10.00 Scott Mills 1.00pm Kevin Greening 4.00 Dave Pearce 8.00 Steve Lamacq. The Evening Session 10.00. John Peel 12.00 Gilles Peterson 2.00am Eoin 5.00am Chris Moyles

## RADIO 2 (BBC)

6.00am Mo Dutt 8.00 Sarah Kennedy 10.00 Richard Atkinson 12.00 Jimmy Young 2.00pm Alex Lester 5.00 Johnnie Walker 7.00 Mike Howerd Christmas 8.00 Mike Harding Review of the Year 9.00 The Andy Patheas Soul Show (9/10) 10.00 Route 66 Revived 10.30 Bob Harris 12.00 Katrina Leskanen 3.00am Nicky Horne

## RADIO 5 LIVE (BBC)

5.00am A-Z of Entertainment (1) 6.00 Proulx's Hoops (1) 6.30 Breakfast with Julian Worricker and Annie Webster 9.00 Brian Hayes 12.00 The Midday News with Alan Robb 1.00 Ruscoe and Co 4.00 Drive with Jonathan Legard 7.00 News Extra 7.30 John Inverdale's Football Night. Commentary on the Scottish Premier League match between Dundee United and Rangers 9.30 Muscular Prose (1) 10.00 End of the Year Show. An entertaining look back at the year 12.00 News Extra. Very interesting (1) 1.00am Up All Night 4.00 Extra Time (1)

## VIRGIN

6.00am Jeremy Clark 10.00 Russ Williams 1.00pm Nick Abbot 4.00 Harriet Scott 5.45 Mark Forster 10.00 Richard Allen 2.00am James Martin

## TALK RADIO

6.00am Bill Overton & Sally Meen 9.00 Scott Chesham 12.00pm Lorraine Kelly 2.00pm Nancy Roberts 4.00 Peter Dinkley 5.00 Sports Zone 9.00 James White 1.00pm Gordon Askey

## RADIO 3

6.00am On Air with Stephanie Hughes 6.55 Masterworks with Peter Hobbay 10.30 Artist of the Week: Barbara Bonney (1) 11.00 Sound Stories: Beliefs — The Underperformed Daughter Narrated by Peggy Reynolds 12.00 Composer of the Week: Saint-Saëns 2.00 The BBC Proms: The Philharmonia 3.50 The Harmonic Series with Adrian Jack 4.00 Choral Evensong Live from St Bride's, Fleet St 5.00 A Medieval Christmas Music for Christmas 5.30 Music Rooms with Natalie Whelan (8/10) 6.00 Discovering Music with Leonard Stadler (8/10)

## RADIO 4

5.30am World News 5.35 Shipping 5.40 Inshore Forecast 5.45 (FM) Prayer for the Day 5.47 Farming Today with Steve Peacock 6.00 Today with James Haughey 6.00 Midweek with the Times columnist Libby Purves 6.45 (LW) Daily Service 9.45 (FM) Serial: Peter Pan and Wendy (4/5) 10.00 Woman's Hour with Sheila McKechnie 11.00 Manchester Story 11.30 Choices Grenfell New series (1/4) 12.00 (LW) News Headlines: Shipping Forecast 12.00 (FM) News 12.04pm You and Yours 1.00 The World at One with Gail Hart 1.30 Wildcrash The first car trial of the wildcat quiz 2.00 The Archers (1) 2.15 Afternoon Play: Open Secrets Dramatisation of Alice Munro's tale 3.00 Gardeners' Question Time Special (1) 3.30 The Small Ad Private Eye's small ads (1)

3.45 It Didn't Mean A Thing See Choices

4.00 News Notes with Graham Norton (1)

4.30 Thinking Allowed — The Largep

5.00 PM 6.00 Six O'Clock News 6.30 Bookart

7.00 The Archers 7.15 Front Row

7.45 Under One Roof by Michelle Hanson (1)

8.45 Keyword with Matt Frie (3/4) (1)

9.00 Animals Behaving Badly (2/4)

9.30 Midweek (1) 10.00 The World Tonight

10.45 Book at Bedtime — Five Daisies

11.00 Late Night on 4: Sean Lock's 15 Minutes of

Misery New comedy series

11.15 Midsom: the Midsom: Years

11.30 Children's Hour with Alison Armstrong and Miller

12.00 News 12.30am The Late Book: The Resistant

of Beasts Part three of Magnus Malt's tale

12.45 Shipping Forecast 1.00 Am World Service

FREQUENCY GUIDE. RADIO 1, FM 97.8-99.5. RADIO 2, FM 88.0-90.2. RADIO 3, FM 90.2-92.4. RADIO 4, FM 92.4-94.6. LW 198. MW 720. RADIO 5 LIVE, MW 883, 908. WORLD SERVICE, FM 648; LW 198 (13.45-5.55am). CLASSIC FM, FM 100-102. VIRGIN RADIO, FM 105.8; MW 1197, 1215. TALK RADIO, MW 1053, 1089. Television and radio listings compiled by Ian Hughes, Rosemary Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McNamee.

## WORD-WATCHING

Answers from page 33

HUKE

(B) An outer garment of the 15th century. In length, it was short for riders and to the knee for pedestrians.

SKEG

(a) A short length of extension of the keel, tapered or cut to a step, and projecting beyond the sternpost in order to protect the rudder.

ESKER

(c) A sinuous ridge of coarse gravel representing the deposits of a (meltwater) stream flowing sub-glacially.

VAJJI

(c) A tribal republic flourishing in India at the time of Buddha. The word also indicates the people, who were a confederation of various tribes.

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

1... Qxg5 2. Qxg5 Rxb3+ 3. Kg2 Rb2 checkmate.

The best of crime drama on the screen... on BBC1 tonight

The Echo



The best of crime fiction on the page... in all good bookshops now

MINETTE WALTERS

Read the award winning novel in paperback

The Breaker

Also available - her bestselling new hardback *The Breaker* from bookshops everywhere





# Double standards are never very far away

Bill Clinton's penetrating opinion as to what constitutes sexual relations has occupied us for almost a year now. Oh dear: only one sentence finished but already in need of a quick trim, for that word "us" has a decidedly presumptuous look about it. By "us" I mean of course the media and the American political establishment. I do not necessarily mean you and I certainly do not mean a man in Kansas.

"Most of us feel he's done a good job," Man in Kansas told Mark Lawson during the Clinton Complex. "If one Monica Lewinsky can make him do that good a job, why don't we send him another one?" That remark alone guarantees that copies of the programme inadvertently reaching the White House will be burnt at the gate.

Funny place, America. The Stars and Stripes flies in front of millions of ordinary homes and

down the road otherwise ordinary homeowners gather to have a little evening fun by petrol-bombing abortion clinics. Morally conservative, you might say. But when the President starts waving his cigar around, aw, shucks, what the hell! Which was the conundrum at the heart of the programme.

Several academics explained what the Clinton complex is and one of the more succinct put it this way: "The Clinton complex is the idea that morality is a function of proximity. If something immoral happens right in front of you, you get upset. But if it happens far away, in Washington, you just say to yourself, 'no big deal'."

Yes, I think I see how that might work. Certainly I get more upset when a job leaves a brick through my car window than I do when I read the annual statistics for car crime. The bad news for Clinton is that all the senators who have to vote soon live not far away from

Clinton) and nobody in Kansas has a substantive say in the matter, except in the sense that the two senators Kansas sends to Washington could be checked out if they chuck out Clinton (which they won't, so there).

Lawson's visit to Kansas and his tour of various academics and media folk was more entertainment than enlightenment because by now we all know that the absurd pantomime under way on Capitol Hill is just a bunch of politicians hoping to do to Clinton one of the things he appears not to have done to Lewinsky.

We cannot, though, deny Washington its moment of sexual gratification. As one contributor told Lawson, we now have the spectacle of "studly old law professors" discussing over lunch how that stain got on to Lewinsky's dress. And Washington at last has a scandal: usually these occur in

## REVIEW



Peter Barnard

New York or Los Angeles and the nation's capital is left with financial scandals. No wonder nothing came of the Whitewater inquiry, it was too boring. Washington needed something new: for money, read sex.

The Christmas mish-mash leaves you longing for something with a bit of originality and depth as I was pleased to welcome last night's *The Echo* (BBC), concludes

tonight), a proper mystery that is well written, by Kevin Hood, from the Minette Walters novel. The basics: Trump found dead in Docklands garage of Amanda Powell (Joely Richardson), who is a wealthy, elegant, attractive woman from my perspective and a "stuck-up, frosty, supercilious bitch" from the perspective of tabloid photographer Lisa (Camilla Power).

Said photographer and reporter Mike Deacon (Clive Owen) are on the case because Powell has paid for the tramp's funeral. Why? Is the tramp Powell's missing husband? Don't know, yet. My new year resolution is never to comment on television portrayals of journalists or newspapers, so I will rush to say that *The News* on *Sunday* is a risible name for a, er, newspaper. Camilla Power looks more like a model than a photographer and even tabloid reporters occasionally have a shave.

The plot is developing nicely though and Deacon is an especially well-drawn character with dark elements in his own life (he blames himself for his father's suicide that look likely to mesh with the main plot. By the end of episode one I was tempted to agree with "frosty" as a description of Powell, though I am sure whether the word applies to the character or to Richardson's portrayal, which appears to be inspired by the minimalist tendency.

*The Echo* was not exactly a bundle of laughs, you could always take a stroll after it and then tune in for *Glorious* (Channel 4). What a wonderful man is Eddie Izzard. This was his performance at the Apollo, Hammersmith, during the 1997 world tour. The evening had a theme, no less than that part of the history of mankind that is recorded in the Bible. Naturally, Izzard's brilliant lateral

thinking meant trips down ump-ton alleys to discuss everything from vacuum cleaners, Diana, Princess of Wales, and Helen of Troy along the way.

Izzard is so well rehearsed that he sounds as if he is making it up as he goes along. Or is he so under-rehearsed that he has to make it up as he goes along? Oh, well, either way it is a very funny act, the product of a sophisticated mind. The segment on the Creation, with God's mother rousing him from bed on the first morning ("come on, you'll miss the best of the day") was a terrific ramble.

Apparently God would have been better off not trying Himself to seven days. "Do it like Microsoft, it's going to be done by Sunday, Tuesday, next week: about a month; we're gonna bring it out when we're ready, right? And I liked Izzard on Achilles: 'Great man except that he had an Achilles' heel' — what an irony."

## BBC1

7.00am News Weather (T) (1899473)  
7.10 Children's BBC: The Greasy Sasur Gang (1899473) 7.15 Teletubbies (1899473) 7.40 VeggieTales: The VeggieTales (1899473) 8.00 Blue Peter Review of the Year (1899473) 8.30 The Big Game (1899473) 8.55 The Fenne Game (1899473) 9.55 Teletubbies (1899473)  
10.00 News Weather (T) (1899473)  
10.30 The Barrow Executive (1899473) A lowly television production writer discovers his pet chimpanzee has the unusual talent of being able to spot good show formats. Comedy, starring Kurt Russell. Directed by Robert Butler (T) (1899473)  
12.00pm Wipeout (T) (1899473)  
12.30 Laughing for Ages (T) (1899473)  
1.00 News Weather (T) (1899473)  
1.15 Neighbours (T) (1899473)  
1.40 Battersea "Dog" Home A Lincolnshire woman visits the home, pick a bower (1899473)  
2.10 20/20: The Sea Conclusion While trying to discover the secrets of a Captain Nemo, the crew of the Nautilus, starring Michael (T) (1899473)  
3.40 The World's Strongest Man Lee Bowers represents Britain (1899473)  
4.10 The Great Outdoors A family's camping holiday is ruined when their pet chimp escapes the tent along, Corry, and Arnette. Directed by Howard Deutch (T) (1899473)  
5.35 Newsround Review of the Year Presented by Chris Rogers, Mimsie and Kate Sanderson (T) (1899473)  
6.00 Neighbours (T) (1899473)  
6.30 News Weather (T) (1899473)  
6.45 Regional News (1899473)  
6.55 Only Fools and Horses Trotter brothers arrive in America, walk straight into disaster when a car is stolen (T) (1899473)  
8.30 A Question of Sport, hosted by Crispin (T) (1899473)  
8.50 The National Lottery Luck Stories The year's people, featuring a round-up of some that made the headlines and some that didn't (T) (1899473)  
9.00 The Saturday Night Takeaway Billy's past life. Comedy, with Clive Owen (1899473)  
10.14 National Lottery Update (1899473)  
10.15 News Weather (T) (1899473)  
10.45 Review of the Year See Lawson presents a look back at 1998 (T) (1899473)  
12.00 Faces of Islam: Muslim Danny Thompson (T) (1899473)  
12.20am 42 Up Concluding the update of the real-life case (T) (1899473)  
1.35 They Might Be Giants (1899473) A man suffering the delusion that he is Sherlock Holmes is treated by a woman psychiatrist called Dr Watson. Comedy, starring George C. Scott and Joanne Woodward. Directed by Anthony Harvey (T) (1899473)  
2.55 Weather (T) (1899473)  
3.00 BBC News 24 (1899473)

## BBC2

6.35am The Great Dictator (1940) Social satire, starring Charlie Chaplin. Directed by Charlie Chaplin (T) (1899473) 6.55 FLAK: Andrew Ayrton (1899473) 7.00 Perfectly Frank (1899473) 7.15 The West (1899473) 12.20pm Classics for Kids (1899473)  
1.00 The Ashes: Highlights of England's victory in the final Test (1899473) 1.40 Rick the Hunt (T) (1899473) 1.50 Rick the Hunt (T) (1899473) 2.00 The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures: Staying Alive — The Body in Balance (T) (1899473) 3.00 Perfectly Frank (T) (1899473) 3.05 Shooting the Century: insight into the arrival of sound recording in the 1930s (T) (1899473) 3.55 Perfectly Frank (T) (1899473) 4.00 Assault on a Queen (1899473) A gang of villains out to hijack a passenger ship. With Frank Sinatra, Vera Lee and Tony Franciosa. Directed by Jack Donaghy (T) (1899473) 5.50 Poppa Will: Nero chooses the seductive Poppa over his wife Olivia (T) (1899473) 6.30 The Simpsons: Bart joins the Junior Campers and persuades Homer to go rafting (T) (1899473) 6.55 The Simpsons: Bart and Lisa undermine a barbaric local tradition (T) (1899473) 7.15 Star Trek: The Next Generation: The Enterprise. Alexander, who the Enterprise is intended to make it his new home, but encounters some unexpected parental opposition (T) (1899473) 8.00 Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Michelle Geller and Nicholas Brendon (T) (1899473) 8.25 Rick the Hunt: Vince takes a shine to the vacuum cleaner and Julie. Brenda teaches Rick, Wendy and Bob about sex (T) (1899473) 9.35 Never Mind the Buzzcocks: Christmas special, with Mel C and Natalie Appleton (T) (1899473)

## HTV

5.55am ITN Morning News (1899473) 6.00 GMTV (1899473) 6.25 ITN News (T) (1899473) 6.30 HTV News (T) (1899473) 6.35 HTV: House of Toons: Tiny Toon Adventures (1899473) 10.10 Brilliant Creatures (1899473) 10.35 The Shaggy Dog (TV) (1899473) A teenage science whiz's attempt to become a body builder as he turns himself into a shaggy sheepdog. Directed by Dennis Dugan (T) (1899473) 12.20pm HTV News (T) (1899473) 12.30 ITN Lunchtime News (T) (1899473) 1.00 Shortland Street (1899473) 1.30 My Girl (1981) Moving drama, starring Macaulay Culkin, Anna Chlumsky, Dan Aykroyd and Jamie Lee Curtis. Directed by Howard Zieff (T) (1899473) 3.25 Cartoon Time (1899473) 3.30 ITN News Headlines (T) (1899473) 3.35 HTV News (T) (1899473) 3.40 Iron Will (1993) Premiere. Fact-based drama about a youngster who competes in a gruelling cross-country dog-sled race. MacKenzie Astin stars. Directed by Charles Haug (T) (1899473) 5.40 ITN Early Evening News (T) (1899473) 5.50 Shortland Street (1899473) 6.25 WALKS: Wales Tonight (T) (1899473) 6.30 HTV West Weather (1899473) 6.35 The West Tonight (T) (1899473) 7.00 Emmerdale: Andy spills the beans about his father (T) (1899473) 7.30 Coronation Street: Alec bids farewell to the Street (T) (1899473) 8.00 The Three Musketeers (1993) Premiere. Disney adaptation of the classic French novel by Alexandre Dumas. Directed by Stephen Herek (T) (1899473)

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## RACING 33

Irish victory keeps Istabraq in the frame for Cheltenham

## SPORT

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 30 1998

## MOTOR SPORT 38

How to stay on the right track in Dakar Rally



Headley takes the individual honours in dramatic 12-run victory in fourth Test

# England hit back to keep series alive

FROM ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT, IN MELBOURNE

IT WAS payback day in Melbourne as an arrogant Australia side, accustomed to the tame compliance of a generation of English losers, sustained a defeat of the type patented by their Ashes opponents. Australia, requiring only 175, lost their last seven wickets for 32 and England took the fourth Test by a mere 12 runs.

This was only England's second victory in Australia since 1986-87, when they last held the Ashes. In that time, they have lost eight of the 14 Tests played here. But for bad weather in Brisbane, they would have been trailing 3-0 even before this match but now, remarkably, they can share the series if they win again in Sydney next week.

They will go there with spirits lifted dramatically. Only a week ago, they experienced the nadir of their tour with a humiliating defeat in Tasmania that horrified the coach, David Lloyd, and the captain, Alec Stewart. Lloyd renounced himself to standing down before the next Test series; Stewart probably felt like doing the same.

Now, with a capriciousness beyond even the usual habits of this oscillating team, they have turned the series around and created a Sydney showpiece out of what promised to be a stale and irrelevant finale. The worst pitch and worst weather of the series produced the best match, a baffling patchwork of heroics and howlers spoilt only by the rain that prevented play on Boxing Day, when 80,000 might have been present.

As the England players celebrated raucously, with Dean Headley's six wickets their obvious first toast, Stewart was understandably jubilant. "I hope we will read about this on the back pages of the Australian newspapers and not the inside," he chorled. "We always thought 175 would be a competitive target, because Australia, great side as they are, have sometimes struggled batting fourth."

Mark Taylor, the Australia captain, said his team "got lazy" in conceding a game for which England's initial odds were 9-1. "We played badly,"

Our top five batsmen all got between 18 and 43, when all it needed was for one to go on to make 70.

"Our whole attitude in the past two hours was poor. A Test match can change in half an hour and if one side starts thinking about what they are going to do after play, it happens. We forgot there was another team out there playing for pride. Sometimes, a team needs this kind of shock but I don't like it when I'm captain."

There are some who believe an environment of conspiracy and corruption had more to do with it and at least one angry reader phoned Melbourne's daily broadsheet last night to insist it was the worst case of match-fixing he had seen.

England will be rightly in-



'If he never takes another Test wicket, Dean Headley will long recall this day'

Michael Henderson, page 37

sulted by such talk. They won this Test because, ultimately, they grasped an opportunity. Several others had eluded them during three of the longest and most dramatic playing days Test cricket can have known.

Controversy clouded the victory on more than one front. Glenn McGrath, the Australia fast bowler, was disciplined for "crude and abusive language" by the match referee, John Reid, who had already responded sympathetically to Stewart's concern over unreasonable anomalies imposed by new regulations regarding making up lost time.

Reid has been slow to move against McGrath, whose offensive and gratuitous bad-mouthing of English batsmen

sets a sorry example to the young, and his action yesterday was disappointingly half-hearted. After a systematic going-over of England's No 11, Alan Mullally, involving much swearing and posturing, McGrath escaped with a fine of 30 per cent of his match fee (about £1,000), suspended for four months. England will believe that there was more justice in the fact that Mullally's subsequent, aggrieved blows made the difference between winning and losing.

For the good of the game in the long term, Reid must be more decisive on the issue of added time. Theoretically, the new regulation is admirable on occasions such as this, when the entire first day was lost to rain, but it had plainly not been thought through.

Play on Monday continued for almost eight hours — not least because of England's abominable over-rate — and that marathon was exceeded yesterday. The game was won as the day entered its ninth hour but, if the extra half-hour claimed by Australia had been completed, England would have been in the field for 4½ hours without a break.

This ludicrous prospect was the outcome of inflexibility, which involved the tea interval being taken when the Australia innings ended and the evening session thus being extended for a second time.

It is not just undesirable but unhealthy for a team to be asked to field for sessions longer than 2½ hours in Test cricket and Stewart was swift to make his point to Reid last night. "I have spoken to him but I think he has already made some recommendations," he said.

Taylor was sceptical about the benefits of added time. "The rules need looking at," he said. "You don't want Tests finishing at that time when you have already started early. You've got to draw the line somewhere or you'll end up starting at nine in the morning and playing until nine at night."

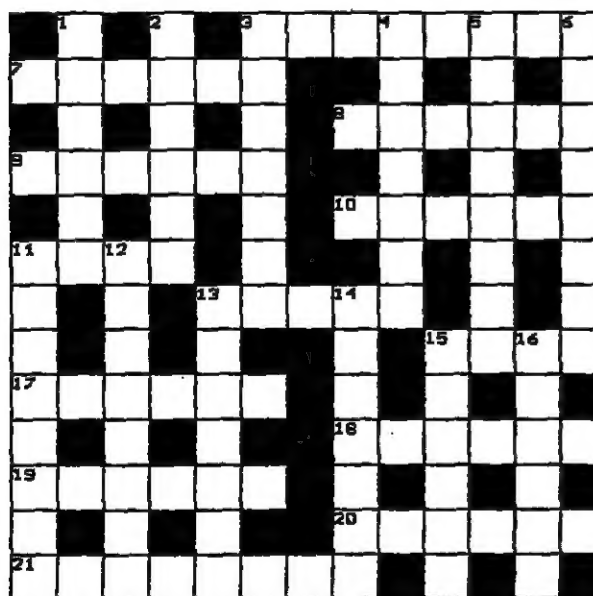
England will settle for that if it produces more results like this. But, as Stewart emphasised: "We have got to maintain this level of performance through a game. We've got to make sure this is not just a one-off."

Match report, page 36  
John Woodcock, page 36  
Full scoreboard, page 36



Gough, who has bowled well but without luck throughout the series, is exultant after striking the final blow in the memorable victory yesterday

## TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1601

ACROSS  
3 Supplied; given (thru) (8)  
7 Members of household (6)  
8 Slightly worried (6)  
9 Lowered (light level) (6)  
10 Gunman in nest (6)  
11 Exalted (4)  
13 Aqueous substance (5)  
15 Standard; stain (4)  
17 Crudely bright (6)  
18 Arbitrary (6)  
19 Church (robing) room (6)  
20 Cowardly (6)  
21 Supporter of king (8)

DOWN  
1 The Heavenly Twins (6)  
2 Cordiality (6)  
3 Leones' daughter (Winter's Tale) (7)  
4 Wine-merchant (7)  
5 Non-Israel Jewish population (8)  
6 First light (8)  
11 Morning-after effect (8)  
12 An island; sexman's woolly (6)  
13 Profligate type (7)  
14 Pull out (7)  
15 US surrealist photographer (3,3)  
16 An island; a scholarship founder (6)

SOLUTION TO NO 1600

ACROSS: 1 Luck 3 Crossbow 9 Canoe 10 Buoyant  
11 Dutiful 12 Duff 14 Tallis 16 Degree 18 Lava  
19 Riposte 22 Epithet 23 Plato 24 Tendency 25 Mesh  
DOWN: 1 Locidity 2 Constellation 4 Rabble 5 Spondree  
6 Beaufort Scale 7 Wits 8 Serf 13 Behemoth 15 Ivanhoe  
17 Critic 20 Pupa 21 Belt

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## Gallagher holds hands up to error over Oakes

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

MICHAEL OAKES, the Aston Villa goalkeeper, is to have his controversial dismissal in the match against Blackburn Rovers on Boxing Day expunged from the records. Dermot Gallagher, the referee, reviewed the incident on video over the weekend and has asked for the sending-off to be annulled. The Football Association will confirm the decision later this week.

Oakes was shown the red card by Gallagher during the 2-1 defeat at Ewood Park after catching the ball and appearing to carry it out of his area. After Gallagher consulted with Dave Horlick, his assistant, he sent off Oakes for the offence of deliberate handball.

However, video evidence later proved that Oakes had released the ball fractionally before his momentum took him out of the penalty area. Gallagher realised the mistake and discussed the matter with Phillip Don, the referees officer of the FA Premier League, on Sunday.

"Dermot looked at it and also spoke with Dave Horlick," Don said yesterday. "Had he seen the incident at the time as he did on tape, he would not have sent off Oakes. It was a genuine error of judgment, just one of those unfortunate incidents that happens now and again."

Gallagher has sent his match report to the FA with a covering letter that explains his actions on the night and subsequent withdrawal of the red card. "The FA will now act accordingly," Don said.

Villa officials had planned to speak to Gallagher in an

attempt to persuade him to change his mind. "Technically, we can't appeal," John Gregory, the Villa manager, had said, "but I gather our people are going to get in touch with him and ask him to reconsider his verdict."

"Knowing Dermot as I do, he is a man — a man's man — and men stand up and hold up their hands if they've made a mistake. They don't hide behind bureaucracy and I hope he sees sense." Villa's personal approach, which would have been contrary to FA rules, was not needed. Gallagher stood up and owned up.

Arsenal found themselves in a similar position yesterday after the dismissal of Patrick Vieira during the 1-0 victory

against Charlton Athletic at The Valley on Monday.

Vieira was sent off for violent conduct by Uriah Rennie after appearing to elbow Neil Redfearn, the Charlton midfielder, in the face early in the second half. However, video replays later showed that Vieira made contact only with Redfearn's shoulder and that Redfearn's reaction — he clutched his face — was perhaps exaggerated.

Arsenal have announced their intention to appeal and have three days in which to lodge a claim for wrongful dismissal.

Vieira's premature departure could land Arsenal with a £50,000 fine, which was imposed on the club during the summer — but suspended for a year — after their poor disciplinary record last season. They amassed 95 bookings, 70 in the FA Carling Premiership, and six dismissals.

They have fared little better this season. Vieira was the sixth Arsenal player to be sent off, following in the disgraced footsteps of Emmanuel Petit, Lee Dixon, Martin Keown, Ray Parlour and Gilles Grimandi, and they have collected 50 cautions in all competitions.

The FA could invoke the suspended fine when it reviews Arsenal's record during the summer. "Any club with a poor one is likely to have a fine imposed," an FA spokesman said yesterday. "Arsenal have a fine hanging over them from last season and it is possible that it may be enforced."

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Gallagher: misjudgment

## Ward joins Kidd's revival at Blackburn

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

ASHLEY WARD yesterday became Brian Kidd's second signing since he took over as manager of Blackburn Rovers, joining the club for £4.5 million from Barnsley. Ward is seen as the ideal replacement for Chris Sutton, who is out for six weeks after injuring a knee in the 2-1 win over Aston Villa on Boxing Day.

Ward, 28, is likely to make his debut in the FA Cup third-round tie at home to Charlton on Saturday.

The two clubs agreed the transfer fee last week with John Dennis, the Barnsley chairman, finally giving in to Blackburn after resisting bids from Leicester and Leeds.

Ward had made his intention to return to the Premiership sooner rather than later clear, although he refused to state publicly that he wanted to leave Barnsley. He underlined his determination, however, by declining to sign an extension to his contract.

After the most traumatic ten days of his four-month stint as manager of Newcastle United, Rudd Gullit will find himself in the unfamiliar position of delivering good news to the Tyne-side populace this morning when he unveils Didier Domi, the left-sided French defender, as his second new signing at St James' Park.

Unlike his compatriot, Ibrahim Ba, whose proposed transfer from AC Milan broke down last week, Domi, 20, sailed through his medical yesterday, concluding a draw-out £4 million deal with Paris Saint-Germain.

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